

De Balzac

H. DE BALZAC

COMÉDIE HUMAINE

Edited by

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PARISIANS IN THE COUNTRY

(*Les Parisiens en Province*)

Translated by

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with a Preface by

GEORGE SAINTSBURY

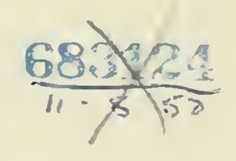


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PREFACE

I HAVE sometimes wondered whether it was accident or intention which made Balzac so frequently combine early and late work in the same volume. The question is certainly insoluble, and perhaps not worth solving, but it presents itself once more in the present instance. *L'Illustre Gaudissart* is a story of 1832, the very heyday of Balzac's creative period, when even his pen could hardly keep up with the abundance of his fancy and the gathered stores of his minute observation. *La Muse du Département* dates ten years and more later, when, though there was plenty of both left, both sacks had been deeply dipped into.

The first is, of course, slight, not merely in bulk, but in conception. Balzac's Tourangeau patriotism may have amused itself by the idea of the villagers 'rolling' the great Gaudissart; but the ending of the tale can hardly be thought to be quite so good as the beginning. Still, that beginning is altogether excellent. The sketch of the *commis-voyageur* generally smacks of that *physiologie* style of which Balzac was so fond; but it is good, and Gaudissart himself, as well as the whole scene with his *épouse libre*, is delightful. The Illustrious One was evidently a favourite character with his creator. He nowhere plays a very great part; but it is everywhere

a rather favourable and, except in this little mishap with Margaritis (which, it must be observed, does not turn entirely to his discomfiture), a rather successful part. We have him in *César Birotteau* superintending the early efforts of Popinot to launch the Huile Céphalique. He was present at the great ball. He served as intermediary to M. de Bauvan in the merciful scheme of buying at fancy prices the handiwork of the count's faithless spouse, and so providing her with a livelihood; and later as a theatrical manager, a little spoilt by his profession, we find him in *Le Cousin Pons*. But he is always what the French call a 'good devil,' and here he is a very good devil indeed.

Although *La Muse du Département* is a much more important work, it cannot perhaps be spoken of in quite such unhesitating terms. It contains indeed, in the personage of Lousteau, one of the very most elaborate of Balzac's portraits of a particular type of men of letters. The original is said to have been Jules Janin, who is somewhat disadvantageously contrasted here and elsewhere with Claude Vignon, said on the same rather vague authority to be Gustave Planche. Both Janin and Planche are now too much forgotten, but in both more or less (and in Lousteau very much 'more') Balzac certainly cannot be said to have dealt mildly with his *bête noire*, the critical temperament. Lousteau, indeed, though not precisely a scoundrel, is both a rascal and a cad. Even Balzac seems a little shocked at his *lettre de faire part* in reference to his mistress's child; and it is seldom possible to discern in any of his proceedings the most remote approximation to the conduct of a gentleman. But, then, as we have seen, and shall see,

Balzac's standard for the conduct of his actual gentlemen was by no means fantastically exquisite or discouragingly high, and in the case of his Bohemians it was accommodating to the utmost degree. He seems to despise Lousteau, but rather for his insouciance and neglect of his opportunities of making himself a position than for anything else.

I have often felt disposed to ask those who would assert Balzac's absolute infallibility as a gynæcologist to give me a reasoned criticism of the heroine of this novel. I do not entirely 'figure to myself' Dinah de La Baudraye. It is perfectly possible that she should have loved a 'sweep' like Lousteau; there is certainly nothing extremely unusual in a woman loving worse sweeps even than he. But would she have done it, and having done it, have also done what she did afterwards? These questions may be answered differently; I do not answer them in the negative myself, but I cannot give them an affirmative answer with the conviction which I should like to show.

Among the minor characters, the *substitut* de Chagny has a touch of nobility which contrasts happily enough with Lousteau's unworthiness. Bianchon is as good as usual: Balzac always gives Bianchon a favourable part. Madame Piédefer is one of the numerous instances in which the unfortunate class of mothers-in-law atones for what are supposed to be its crimes against the human race; and old La Baudraye, not so hopelessly repulsive in a French as he would be in an English novel, is a shrewd old rascal enough.

But I cannot think the scene of the Parisians *blaguing* the Sancerrois a very happy one. That it is in exceed-

ingly bad taste might not matter so very much ; Balzac would reply, and justly, that he had not intended to represent it as anything else. That the fun is not very funny may be a matter of definition and appreciation. But what scarcely admits of denial or discussion is that it is tyrannously too long. The citations of *Olympia* are pushed beyond measure, beyond what is comic, almost beyond the licence of farce ; and the comments, which remind one rather of the heavy jesting on critics in *Un Prince de la Bohême* and the short-lived *Revue Parisienne*, are laboured to the last degree. The part of Nathan, too, is difficult to appreciate exactly, and altogether the book does not seem to me a *réussite.*

The history of *L'Illustre Gaudissart* is, for a story of Balzac's, almost null. It was inserted without any previous newspaper appearance in the first edition of *Scènes de la Vie de Province* in 1833, and entered with the rest of them into the first edition also of the *Comédie*, when the joint title, which it has kept since, of *Les Parisiens en Province* was given to it. Its companion has a rather more complicated record. It appeared at first, not quite complete and under the title of *Dinah Piédefer*, in *Le Messager* during March and April 1843, and was almost immediately published as a book, with works of other writers, under the general title of *Les Mystères de Province*, and accompanied by some other work of its own author's. It had four parts and fifty-two chapters in *Le Messager*, an arrangement which was but slightly altered in the volume form. M. de Lovenjoul gives some curious indications of mosaic work in it, and some fragments which do not now appear in the text.

G. S.

PARISIANS IN THE COUNTRY

GAUDISSART THE GREAT

To Madame la Duchesse de Castries.

Is not the commercial traveller—a being unknown in earlier times—one of the most curious types produced by the manners and customs of this age? And is it not his peculiar function to carry out in a certain class of things the immense transition which connects the age of material development with that of intellectual development? Our epoch will be the link between the age of isolated forces rich in original creativeness, and that of the uniform but levelling force which gives monotony to its products, casting them in masses, and following out an unifying idea—the ultimate expression of social communities. After the Saturnalia of intellectual communism, after the last struggles of many civilisations concentrating all the treasures of the world on a single spot, must not the darkness of barbarism invariably supervene?

The commercial traveller is to ideas what coaches are to men and things. He carts them about, he sets them moving, brings them into impact. He loads himself at the centre of enlightenment with a supply of beams which he scatters among torpid communities. This human *pyrophoros* is an ignorant instructor, mystified and mystifying, a disbelieving priest who talks all the more glibly of arcana and dogmas. A strange

figure! The man has seen everything, he knows everything, he is acquainted with everybody. Saturated in Parisian vice, he can assume the rusticity of the countryman. Is he not the link that joins the village to the capital, though himself not essentially either Parisian or provincial?

For he is a wanderer. He never sees to the bottom of things; he learns only the names of men and places, only the surface of things; he has his own foot-rule, and measures everything by that standard; his glance glides over all he sees, and never penetrates the depths. He is inquisitive about everything, and really cares for nothing. A scoffer, always ready with a political song, and apparently equally attached to all parties, he is generally patriotic at heart. A good actor, he can assume by turns the smile of liking, satisfaction, and obligingness, or cast it off and appear in his true character, in the normal frame which is his state of rest.

He is bound to be an observer or to renounce his calling. Is he not constantly compelled to sound a man at a glance, and guess his mode of action, his character, and, above all, his solvency; and, in order to save time, to calculate swiftly the chances of profit? This habit of deciding promptly in matters of business makes him essentially dogmatic; he settles questions out of hand, and talks as a master, of the Paris theatres and actors, and of those in the provinces. Besides, he knows all the good and all the bad places in the kingdom, *de actu et visu.* He would steer you with equal confidence to the abode of virtue or of vice. Gifted as he is with the eloquence of a hot-water tap turned on at will, he can with equal readiness stop short or begin again, without a mistake, his stream of ready-made phrases, flowing without pause, and producing on the victim the effect of a moral douche. He is full of pertinent anecdotes, he smokes, he drinks. He wears a chain with seals and trinkets, he impresses the 'small fry,' is looked at as a *milord* in the villages,

never allows himself to be 'got over'—a word of his slang—and knows exactly when to slap his pocket and make the money jingle so as not to be taken for a 'sneak' by the women servants—a suspicious race—of the houses he calls at.

As to his energy, is it not the least of the characteristics of this human machine? Not the kite pouncing on its prey, not the stag inventing fresh doublings to escape the hounds and put the hunter off the trail, not the dogs coursing the game, can compare with the swiftness of his rush when he scents a commission, the neatness with which he trips up a rival to gain upon him, the keenness with which he feels, sniffs, and spies out an opportunity for 'doing business.' How many special talents must such a man possess! And how many will you find in any country of these diplomates of the lower class, profound negotiators, representatives of the calico, jewelry, cloth, or wine trades, and often with more acumen than ambassadors, who are indeed for the most part but superficial?

Nobody in France suspects the immense power constantly wielded by the commercial traveller, the bold pioneer of the transactions which embody to the humblest hamlet the genius of civilisation and Parisian inventiveness in its struggle against the common sense, the ignorance, or the habits of rustic life. We must not overlook these ingenious labourers, by whom the intelligence of the masses is kneaded, moulding the most refractory material by sheer talk, and resembling in this the persevering polishers whose file licks the hardest porphyry smooth. Do you want to know the power of the tongue, and the coercive force of mere phrases on the most tenacious coin known—that of the country freeholder in his rustic lair?—Then listen to what some high dignitary of Paris industry can tell you, for whose benefit these clever pistons of the steam engine called Speculation work, and strike, and squeeze.

'Monsieur,' said the director-cashier-manager-secretary-and-chairman of a famous Fire Insurance Company to an experienced economist, 'in the country, out of five hundred thousand francs to be collected in renewing insurances, not more than fifty thousand are paid willingly. The other four hundred and fifty thousand are only extracted by the persistency of our agents, who go to dun the customers who are in arrears till they have renewed their policies, and frighten and excite them by fearful tales of fires.—Eloquence, the gift of the gab, is, in fact, nine-tenths of the matter in the ways and means of working our business.'

To talk—to make oneself heard—is not this seduction? A nation with two Chambers, a woman with two ears, alike are lost! Eve and the Serpent are the perennial myth of a daily recurring fact which began, and will probably only end with the world.

'After two hours' talk you ought to have won a man over to your side,' said an attorney who had retired from business.

Walk round the commercial traveller! Study the man. Note his olive-green overcoat, his cloak, his morocco stock, his pipe, his blue-striped cotton shirt. In that figure, so genuinely original that it can stand friction, how many different natures you may discover. See! What an athlete, what a circus, and what a weapon! He—the world—and his tongue.

A daring seaman, he embarks with a stock of mere words to go and fish for money, five or six hundred thousand francs, say, in the frozen ocean, the land of savages, of Iroquois—in France! The task before him is to extract by a purely mental process and painless operation the gold that lies buried in rural hiding-places. The provincial fish will not stand the harpoon or the torch; it is only to be caught in the seine or the landing-net—the gentlest snare.

Can you ever think again without a shudder of the

deluge of phrases which begins anew every day at dawn in France?—You know the genus; now for the individual.

There dwells in Paris a matchless bagman, the paragon of his kind, a man possessing in the highest degree every condition indispensable to success in his profession. In his words vitriol mingles with bird-lime: bird-lime to catch the victim, besmear it and stick it to the trapper, vitriol to dissolve the hardest limestone.

His 'line' was hats—he *travelled in hats*; but his gifts, and the skill with which he ensnared folks, had earned him such commercial celebrity that dealers in *l'Article Paris*, the dainty novelties invented in Paris workshops, positively courted him to undertake their business. Thus, when he was in Paris on his return from some triumphant progress, he was perpetually being feasted; in the provinces the agents made much of him; in Paris the largest houses were respectful to him. Welcomed, entertained, and fed wherever he went, to him a breakfast or a dinner in solitude was a pleasure and a debauch. He led the life of a sovereign—nay, better, of a journalist. And was he not the living organ of Paris trade?

His name was Gaudissart; and his fame, his influence, and the praises poured on him had gained him the epithet of Gaudissart the Great. Wherever he made his appearance, whether in a counting house or an inn, in a drawing-room or a diligence, in a garret or a bank, each one would exclaim on seeing him, 'Ah, ha! here is Gaudissart the Great!'

Never was a nickname better suited to the appearance, the manners, the countenance, the voice, or the language of a man. Everything smiled on the Traveller, and he smiled on all. *Similia Similibus*; he was for homœopathy: Puns, a horse-laugh, the complexion of a jolly friar, a Rabelaisian aspect; dress, mien, character,

and face combined to give his whole person a stamp of jollification and ribaldry.

Blunt in business, good-natured and capital fun, you would have known him at once for a favourite of the *grisette*—a man who can climb with a grace to the top of a coach, offer a hand to a lady in difficulties over getting out, jest with the postillion about his bandana, and sell him a hat; smile at the inn-maid, taking her by the waist—or by the fancy; who at table will imitate the gurgle of a bottle by tapping his cheek while putting his tongue in it, knows to make beer go off by drawing the air between his lips, or can hit a champagne glass a sharp blow with a knife without breaking it, saying to the others, 'Can you do that?'—who chaffs shy travellers, contradicts well-informed men, is supreme at table, and secures all the best bits.

A clever man too, he could on occasion put aside all such pleasantries, and look very serious when, throwing away the end of his cigar, he would look out on a town and say, 'I mean to see what the folks here are made of.' Then Gaudissart was the most cunning and shrewd of ambassadors. He knew how to be the official with the préfet, the capitalist with the banker, orthodox and monarchical with the royalist, the blunt citizen with the citizen—in short, all things to all men, just what he ought to be wherever he went, leaving Gaudissart outside the door, and finding him again as he went out.

Until 1830 Gaudissart the Great remained faithful to the *Article Paris*. This line of business, in all its branches, appealing to the greater number of human fancies, had enabled him to study the secrets of the heart, had taught him the uses of his persuasive eloquence, the way to open the most closely tied money bags, to incite the fancy of wives and husbands, of children and servants, and to persuade them to gratify

it. None so well as he knew how to lure a dealer by the temptations of a job, and to turn away at the moment when his desire for the bait was at a climax. He acknowledged his indebtedness to the hatter's trade, saying that it was by studying the outside of the head that he had learned to understand its inside, that he was accustomed to find caps to fit folks, to throw himself at their head, and so forth. His jests on hats were inexhaustible.

Nevertheless, after the August and October of 1830, he gave up travelling in hats and the *Article Paris*, and left off trading in all things mechanical and visible to soar in the loftier spheres of Parisian enterprise. He had given up matter for mind, as he himself said, and manufactured products for the infinitely more subtle outcome of the intellect.

This needs explanation.

The stir and upset of 1830 gave rise, as everybody knows, to the new birth of various antiquated ideas which skilful speculators strove to rejuvenate. After 1830 ideas were more than ever a marketable commodity; and, as was once said by a writer who is clever enough to publish nothing, more ideas than pocket-handkerchiefs are filched nowadays. Some day, perhaps, there may be an Exchange for ideas; but even now, good or bad, ideas have their price, are regarded as a crop imported, transferred, and sold, can be realised, and are viewed as an investment. When there are no ideas in the market, speculators try to bring words into fashion, to give them the consistency of an idea, and live on those words as birds live on millet.

Nay, do not laugh! A word is as good as an idea in a country where the ticket on the bale is thought more of than the contents. Have we not seen the book trade thriving on the word *picturesque* when literature had sealed the doom of the word *fantastic*.

Consequently, the excise has levied a tax on the

intellect; it has exactly measured the acreage of advertisements, has assessed the prospectus, and weighed thought—Rue de la Paix *Hôtel du Timbre* (the Stamp Office). On being constituted taxable goods, the intellect and its products were bound to obey the method used in manufacturing undertakings. Thus the ideas conceived after drinking in the brain of some of those apparently idle Parisians who do battle on intellectual ground while emptying a bottle or carving a pheasant's thigh, were handed over the day after their mental birth to commercial travellers, whose business it was to set forth, with due skill, *urbi et orbi*, the fried bacon of advertisement and prospectus by which the departmental mouse is tempted into the editor's trap, and becomes known in the vulgar tongue as a subscriber, or a shareholder, a corresponding member, or, perhaps, a backer or a part owner—and being always a flat.

'What a flat I am!' has more than one poor investor exclaimed after being tempted by the prospect of *founding* something, which has finally proved to be the founding that melts down some thousand or twelve hundred francs.

'Subscribers are the fools who cannot understand that it costs more to forge ahead in the realm of intellect than to travel all over Europe,' is the speculator's view.

So there is a constant struggle going on between the dilatory public which declines to pay the Paris taxes and the collectors who, living on their percentages, baste that public with new ideas, lard it with undertakings, roast it with prospectuses, spit it on flattery, and at last eat it up with some new sauce in which it gets caught and intoxicated like a fly in treacle. What has not been done in France since 1830 to stimulate the zeal, the conceit of the *intelligent* and *progressive* masses? Titles, medals, diplomas, a sort of Legion of Honour invented for the vulgar martyrs, have crowded on each other's heels. And then every manu-

facturer of intellectual commodities has discovered a spice, a special condiment, his particular makeweight. Hence the promises of premiums and of anticipated dividends; hence the advertisements of celebrated names without the knowledge of the hapless artists who own them, and thus find themselves implicated unawares in more undertakings than there are days in the year; for the Law could not foresee this theft of names. Hence, too, this rape of ideas which the contractors for public intelligence—like the slave merchants of the East—snatch from the paternal brain at a tender age, and strip and parade before the Greenhorn, their bewildered Sultan the terrible public, who, if not amused, beheads them by stopping their rations of gold.

This mania of the day reacted on Gaudissart the Great, and this was how. A company got up to effect insurances on life and property heard of his irresistible eloquence, and offered him extraordinarily handsome terms, which he accepted. The bargain concluded, the compact signed, the bagman was weaned of the past under the eye of the Secretary to the Society, who freed Gaudissart's mind of its swaddling-clothes, explained the dark corners of the business, taught him its lingo, showed him all the mechanism bit by bit, anatomised the particular class of the public on whom he was to work, stuffed him with cant phrases, crammed him with repartees, stocked him with peremptory arguments, and, so to speak, put an edge on the tongue that was to operate on life in France. The puppet responded admirably to the care lavished on him by Monsieur the Secretary.

The directors of the Insurance Company were so loud in their praises of Gaudissart the Great, showed him so much attention, put the talents of this living prospectus in so favourable a light in the higher circles of banking and of intellectual diplomacy, that the financial managers of two newspapers, then living but since dead,

thought of employing him to tout for subscriptions. The *Globe*, the organ of the doctrines of Saint-Simon, and the *Mouvement*, a Republican paper, invited Gaudissart the Great to their private offices and promised him, each, ten francs a head on every subscriber if he secured a thousand, but only five francs a head if he could catch no more than five hundred. As the *line* of the political paper did not interfere with that of the Insurance Company, the bargain was concluded. At the same time, Gaudissart demanded an indemnity of five hundred francs for the week he must spend in 'getting up' the doctrine of Saint-Simon, pointing out what efforts of memory and brain would be necessary to enable him to become thoroughly conversant with this *article*, and to talk of it so coherently as to avoid, said he, 'putting his foot in it.'

He made no claim on the Republicans. In the first place, he himself had a leaning to Republican notions—the only views according to the Gaudissart philosophy that could bring about rational equality; and then Gaudissart had ere now dabbled in the plots of the French *carbonari*. He had even been arrested, but released for lack of evidence; and finally, he pointed out to the bankers of the paper that since July he had allowed his moustache to grow, and that he now only needed a particular shape of cap and long spurs to be representative of the Republic.

So for a week he went every morning to be Saint-Simonised at the *Globe* office, and every evening he haunted the bureau of the Insurance Company to learn the elegancies of financial slang. His aptitude and memory were so good, that he was ready to start by the 15th of April, the date at which he usually set out on his first annual circuit.

Two large commercial houses, alarmed at the downward tendency of trade, tempted the ambitious Gaudissart still to undertake their agency, and the King of

Commercial Travellers showed his clemency in consideration of old friendship and of the enormous percentage he was to take.

'Listen to me, my little Jenny,' said he, riding in a hackney cab with a pretty little flower-maker.

Every truly great man loves to be tyrannised over by some feeble creature, and Jenny was Gaudissart's tyrant; he was seeing her home at eleven o'clock from the *Gymnase* theatre, where he had taken her in full dress to a private box on the first tier.

'When I come back, Jenny, I will furnish your room quite elegantly. That gawky Mathilde, who makes you sick with her innuendoes, her real Indian shawls brought by the Russian Ambassador's messengers, her silver-gilt, and her Russian Prince—who is, it strikes me, a rank humbug—even she shall not find a fault in it. I will devote all the "Children" I can get in the provinces to the decoration of your room.'

'Well, that is a nice story, I must say,' cried the florist. 'What, you monster of a man, you talk to me so coolly of your children! Do you suppose I will put up with anything of that kind?'

'Pshaw! Jenny, are you out of your wits? It is a way of talking in my line of business.'

'A pretty line of business indeed!'

'Well, but listen; if you go on talking so much, you will find yourself in the right.'

'I choose always to be in the right! I may say you are a cool hand to-night.'

'You will not let me say what I have to say? I have to push a most capital idea, a magazine that is to be brought out for children. In our walk of life a traveller, when he has worked up a town and got, let us say, ten subscriptions to the *Children's Magazine*, says I have got ten *Children*; just as, if I had ten subscriptions to the *Mouvement*, I should simply say I have got ten *Mouvements*.—Now do you understand?'

'A pretty thing too!—So you are meddling in politics? I can see you already in Sainte-Pélagie, and shall have to trot there to see you every day. Oh, when we love a man, my word! If we knew what we are in for, we should leave you to manage for yourselves, you men!—Well, well, you are going to-morrow, don't let us get the black dog on our shoulders; it is too silly.'

The cab drew up before a pretty house, newly built in the Rue d'Artois, where Gaudissart and Jenny went up to the fourth floor. Here resided Mademoiselle Jenny Courand, who was commonly supposed to have been privately married to Gaudissart, a report which the traveller did not deny. To maintain her power over him, Jenny Courand compelled him to pay her a thousand little attentions, always threatening to abandon him to his fate if he failed in the least of them. Gaudissart was to write to her from each town he stopped at and give an account of every action.

'And how many *Children* will you want to furnish my room?' said she, throwing off her shawl and sitting down by a good fire.

'I get five sous on each subscription.'

'A pretty joke! Do you expect to make me a rich woman—five sous at a time. Unless you are a wandering Jew and have your pocket sewn up tight.'

'But, Jenny, I shall get thousands of *Children*. Just think, the little ones have never had a paper of their own. However, I am a great simpleton to try to explain the economy of business to you—you understand nothing about such matters.'

'And pray, then, Gaudissart, if I am such a gaby, why do you love me?'

'Because you are such a sublime gaby! Listen, Jenny. You see, if I can get people to take the *Globe* and the *Mouvement*, and to pay their insurances, instead of earning a miserable eight or ten thousand francs a

year by trundling around like a man in a show, I may make twenty to thirty thousand francs out of one round.'

'Unlace my stays, Gaudissart, and pull straight—don't drag me askew.'

'And then,' said the commercial traveller, as he admired the girl's satin shoulders, 'I shall be a shareholder in the papers, like Finot, a friend of mine, the son of a hatter, who has thirty thousand francs a year, and will get himself made a peer! And when you think of little Popinot!—By the way, I forgot to tell you that Monsieur Popinot was yesterday made Minister of Commerce. Why should not I too be ambitious? Ah, ha! I could easily catch the cant of the Tribune, and I might be made a Minister—something like a Minister too! Just listen—

'"Gentlemen," and he took his stand behind an armchair, "the Press is not a mere tool, not a mere trade. From the point of view of the politician, the Press is an Institution. Now we are absolutely required here to take the political view of things, hence"—he paused for breath—"hence we are bound to inquire whether it is useful or mischievous, whether it should be encouraged or repressed, whether it should be taxed or free—serious questions all. I believe I shall not be wasting the precious moments of this Chamber by investigating this article and showing you the conditions of the case. We are walking on to a precipice. The Laws indeed are not so guarded as they should be——"

'How is that?' said he, looking at Jenny. 'Every orator says that France is marching towards a precipice; they either say that or they talk of the Chariot of the State and political tempests and clouds on the horizon. Don't I know every shade of colour! I know the dodges of every trade.—And do you know why? I was born with a caul on. My grandmother kept the caul, and I will give it to you. So, you see, I shall soon be in power!'

'You!'

'Why shouldn't I be Baron Gaudissart and Peer of France? Has not Monsieur Popinot been twice returned deputy for the fourth *Arrondissement*?—And he dines with Louis-Philippe. Finot is to be a Councillor of State, they say. Oh! if only they would send me to London as Ambassador, I am the man to nonplus the English, I can tell you. Nobody has ever caught Gaudissart napping—Gaudissart the Great. No, no one has ever got the better of me, and no one ever shall in any line, politics or impolitics, here or anywhere. But for the present I must give my mind to insuring property, to the *Globe*, to the *Mouvement*, to the *Children's* paper, and to the *Article de Paris*.'

'You will be caught over your newspapers. I will lay a wager that you will not get as far as Poitiers without being done.'

'I am ready to bet, my jewel.'

'A shawl!'

'Done. If I lose the shawl, I will go back to trade and hats. But, get the better of Gaudissart? Never! never!'

And the illustrious commercial traveller struck an attitude in front of Jenny, looking at her haughtily, one hand in his waistcoat, and his head half turned in a Napoleonic pose.

'How absurd you are! What have you been eating this evening?'

Gaudissart was a man of eight-and-thirty, of middle height, burly and fat, as a man is who is accustomed to go about in mail-coaches; his face was as round as a pumpkin, florid, and with regular features resembling the traditional type adopted by sculptors in every country for their statues of Abundance, of Law, Force, Commerce, and the like. His prominent stomach was pear-shaped, and his legs were thin, but he was wiry and active. He picked up Jenny, who was half undressed, and carried her to her bed.

'Hold your tongue, *free woman*,' said he. 'Ah, you don't know anything about the free woman and Saint-Simonism, and antagonism, and Fourierism, and criticism, and determined push—well it is—in short, it is ten francs on every subscription, Madame Gaudissart.'

'On my honour, you are going crazy, Gaudissart.'

'Always more and more crazy about you,' said he, tossing his hat on to the sofa.

Next day, after breakfasting in style with Jenny Courand, Gaudissart set out on horseback to call in all the market towns which he had been particularly instructed to work up by the various companies to whose success he was devoting his genius. After spending forty-five days in beating the country lying between Paris and Blois, he stayed for a fortnight in this little city, devoting the time to writing letters and visiting the neighbouring towns. The day before leaving for Tours he wrote to Mademoiselle Jenny Courand the following letter, of which the fulness and charm cannot be matched by any narrative, and which also serves to prove the peculiar legitimacy of the ties that bound these two persons together.

Letter from Gaudissart to Jenny Courand.

'My dear Jenny,—I am afraid you will lose your bet. Like Napoleon, Gaudissart has his star, and will know no Waterloo. I have triumphed everywhere under the conditions set forth. The Insurance business is doing very well. Between Paris and Blois I secured near on two millions; but towards the middle of France heads are remarkably hard, and millions infinitely scarcer. The *Article Paris* toddles on nicely, as usual; it is a ring on your finger. With my usual rattle, I can always come round the shopkeepers. I got rid of sixty-two Ternaux shawls at Orleans; but, on my honour, I

don't know what they will do with them unless they put them back on the sheep.

'As to the newspaper line, the Deuce is in it! that is quite another pair of shoes. God above us! what a deal of piping those good people take before they have learned a new tune. I have got no more than sixty-two *Mouvements* so far; and that in my whole journey is less than the Ternaux shawls in one town. These rascally Republicans won't subscribe at all; you talk to them, and they talk; they are quite of your way of thinking, and you soon are all agreed to upset everything that exists. Do you think the man will fork out? Not a bit of it. And if he has three square inches of ground, enough to grow a dozen cabbages, or wood enough to cut a toothpick, your man will talk of the settlement of landed estate, of taxation, and crops, and compensation—a pack of nonsense, while I waste my time and spittle in patriotism. Business is bad, and the *Mouvement* generally is dull. I am writing to the owners to say so. And I am very sorry as a matter of opinion.

'As to the *Globe*, that is another story. If I talk of the new doctrines to men who seem likely to have a leaning to such quirks, you might think it was a proposal to burn their house down. I tell them it is the coming thing, the most advantageous to their interests, the principle of work by which nothing is lost;—that men have oppressed men long enough, that woman is a slave, that we must strive to secure the triumph of the great Idea of thrift, and achieve a more rational coordination of Society—in short, all the rhodomontade at my command. All in vain! As soon as I start on this subject, these country louts shut up their cupboards as if I had come to steal something, and beg me to be off.

'What fools these owls are! The *Globe* is nowhere. —I told them so. I said, "You are too advanced. You are getting forward, and that is all very well; but you must have something to show. In the provinces they

want to see results." However, I have got a hundred *Globes*; and, seeing the density of these country noodles, it is really a miracle. But I promise them such a heap of fine things, that be hanged if I know how the Globules, or Globists, or Globites, or Globians are ever going to give them. However, as they assured me that they would arrange the world far better than it is arranged at present, I lead the way and prophesy good things at ten francs per head.

'There is a farmer who thought it must have to do with soils, by reason of the name, and I rammed the *Globe* down his throat; he will take to it, I feel sure; he has a prominent forehead, and men with prominent foreheads are always ideologists.

'But as to the *Children!* give me the *Children.* I got two thousand Children between Paris and Blois—a nice little turn! And there is less waste of words. You show the picture to the mother on the sly, so that the child wants to see; then, of course, the child sees; and he tugs at mamma's skirts till he gets his paper, because "Daddy has hisn paper." Mamma's gown cost twenty francs, and she does not want it torn by the brat; the paper costs but six francs, that is cheaper; so the subscription is dragged out. It is a capital, and meets a real want—something between the sugar-plum and the picture-book, the two eternal cravings of childhood. And they can read, too, these frenzied brats.

'Here, at the table-d'hôte, I had a dispute about newspapers and my opinions. I was sitting, peacefully eating, by the side of a man in a white hat who was reading the *Débats*. Said I to myself, "I must give him a taste of my eloquence. Here is a man who is all for the dynasty; I must try to catch him. Such a triumph would be a splendid forecast of success as a Minister. So I set to work, beginning by praising his paper. It was a precious long job, I can tell you. From one thing to another I began to overrule my man,

giving him four-horse speeches, arguments in F sharp, and all the precious rhodomontade. Everybody was listening, and I saw a man with *July* in his moustaches, ready to bite for the *Mouvement*. But, by ill-luck, I don't know how I let slip the word *ganache* (old woman). Away went my dynastic white hat—and a bad hat too, a Lyons hat, half silk and half cotton—with the bit between his teeth in a fury. So I put on my grand air —you know it—and I say to him, "Heyday, Monsieur, you are a hot pot! If you are vexed, I am ready to answer for my words. I fought in July——"—"Though I am the father of a family," says he, "I am ready——" —"You are the father of a family, my dear sir," say I. "You have children?"—"Yes, Monsieur."—"Of eleven?"—"Thereabouts."—"Well, then, Monsieur, *The Children's Magazine* is just about to be published—six francs *per annum*, one number a month, two columns, contributors of the highest literary rank, got up in the best style, good paper, illustrations from drawings by our first artists, genuine India paper proofs, and colours that will not fade." And then I give him a broadside. The father is overpowered! The squabble ends in a subscription.

'"No one but Gaudissart can play that game," cried little tomtit Lamard to that long noodle Bulot when he told him the story at the café.

'To-morrow I am off to Amboise. I shall do Amboise in two days, and write next from Tours, where I am going to try my hand on the deadliest country from the point of view of intelligence and speculation. But on the honour of Gaudissart, they will be done, they *shall* be done! Done brown! By-bye, little one; love me long, and be true to me. Fidelity through thick and thin is one of the characteristics of the free woman. Who kisses your eyes?

'Yours, FÉLIX for ever.'

Five days later Gaudissart set out one morning from the *Faisan* hotel, where he put up at Tours, and went to Vouvray, a rich and populous district where the public mind seemed to him to be open to conviction. He was trotting along the river quay on his nag, thinking no more of the speeches he was about to make than an actor thinks of the part he has played a hundred times. Gaudissart the Great cantered on, admiring the landscape, and thinking of nothing, never dreaming that the happy valleys of Vouvray were to witness the overthrow of his commercial infallibility.

It will here be necessary to give the reader some insight into the public spirit of Touraine. The peculiar wit of a sly romancer, full of banter and epigram, which stamps every page of Rabelais' work, is the faithful expression of the Tourangeau nature, of an intellect as keen and polished as it must inevitably be in a province where the Kings of France long held their court; an ardent, artistic, poetical, and luxurious nature, but prompt to forget its first impulse. The softness of the atmosphere, the beauty of the climate, a certain ease of living and simplicity of manners, soon stifle the feeling for art, narrow the most expansive heart, and corrode the most tenacious will.

Transplant the native of Touraine, and his qualities develop and lead to great things, as has been proved in the most dissimilar ways, by Rabelais and by Semblançay; by Plantin the printer and by Descartes; by Boucicault, the Napoleon of his day; by Pinaigrier, who painted the greater part of our Cathedral glass; by Verville and Courier. But, left at home, the countryman of Touraine, so remarkable elsewhere, remains like the Indian on his rug, like the Turk on his divan. He uses his wit to make fun of his neighbour, to amuse himself, and to live happy to the end of his days. Touraine is the true Abbey of Thelema, so much praised in Gargantua's book. Consenting nuns may be found

there, as in the poet's dream, and the good cheer sung so loudly by Rabelais is supreme.

As to his indolence, it is sublime, and well characterised in the popular witticism: 'Tourangeau, will you have some broth?'—'Yes.'—'Then bring your bowl.'—'I am no longer hungry.'

Is it to the glee of the vinedresser, to the harmonious beauty of the loveliest scenery in France, or to the perennial peace of a province which has always escaped the invading armies of the foreigner, that the soft indifference of those mild and easy habits is due? To this question there is no answer. Go yourself to that Turkey in France, and there you will stay, indolent, idle, and happy. Though you were as ambitious as Napoleon, or a poet like Byron, an irresistible, indescribable influence would compel you to keep your poetry to yourself, and reduce your most ambitious schemes to day-dreams.

Gaudissart the Great was fated to meet in Vouvray one of those indigenous wags whose mockery is offensive only by its absolute perfection of fun, and with whom he had a deadly battle. Rightly or wrongly, your Tourangeau likes to come into his father's property. Hence the doctrines of Saint-Simon were held particularly odious, and heartily abused in those parts; still, only as things are hated and abused in Touraine, with the disdain and lofty pleasantry worthy of the land of good stories and jokes played between neighbours—a spirit which is vanishing day by day before what Lord Byron called English Cant.

After putting up his horse at the *Soleil d'Or*, kept by one Mitouflet, a discharged Grenadier of the Imperial Guard, who had married a wealthy mistress of vinelands, and to whose care he solemnly confided his steed, Gaudissart, for his sins, went first to the prime wit of Vouvray, the life and soul of the district, the jester whose reputation and nature alike made it incumbent

on him to keep his neighbours' spirits up. This rustic Figaro, a retired dyer, was the happy possessor of seven or eight thousand francs a year, of a pretty house on the slope of a hill, of a plump little wife, and of robust health. For ten years past he had had nothing to do but to take care of his garden and his wife, to get his daughter married, to play his game of an evening, to keep himself informed of all the scandal that came within his jurisdiction, to give trouble at elections, to squabble with the great landowners, and arrange big dinners; to air himself on the quay, inquire what was going on in the town, and bother the priest; and, for dramatic interest, to look out for the sale of a plot of ground that cut into the ring fence of his vineyard. In short, he lived the life of Touraine, the life of a small country town.

At the same time, he was the most important of the minor notabilities of the place, and the leader of the small proprietors—a jealous and envious class, chewing the cud of slander and calumny against the aristocracy, and repeating them with relish, grinding everything down to one level, hostile to every form of superiority, scorning it indeed, with the admirable coolness of ignorance.

Monsieur Vernier—so this little great man of the place was named—was finishing his breakfast, between his wife and his daughter, when Gaudissart made his appearance in the dining-room — one of the most cheerful dining-rooms for miles round, with a view from the windows over the Loire and the Cher.

'Is it to Monsieur Vernier himself that I have the honour——?' said the traveller, bending his vertebral column with so much grace that it seemed to be elastic.

'Yes, Monsieur,' said the wily dyer, interrupting him with a scrutinising glance, by which he at once took the measure of the man he had to do with.

'I have come, Monsieur,' Gaudissart went on, 'to

request the assistance of your enlightenment to direct me in this district where, as I learn from Mitouflet, you exert the greatest influence. I am an emissary, Monsieur, to this Department in behalf of an undertaking of the highest importance, backed by bankers who are anxious——'

'Anxious to swindle us!' said Vernier, laughing, long since used to deal with the commercial traveller and to follow his game.

'Just so,' replied Gaudissart the Great with perfect impudence. 'But, as you very well know, sir, since you are so clear-sighted, people are not to be swindled unless they think it to their interest to allow themselves to be swindled. I beg you will not take me for one of the common ruck of commercial gentlemen who trust to cunning or importunity to win success. I am no longer a *traveller*; I was one, Monsieur, and I glory in it. But I have now a mission of supreme importance, which ought to make every man of superior mind regard me as devoted to the enlightenment of his fellow-countrymen. Be kind enough to hear me, Monsieur, and you will find that you will have profited greatly by the half hour's conversation I beg you to grant me. The great Paris bankers have not merely lent their names to this concern, as to certain discreditable speculations such as I call mere rat-traps. No, no, nothing of the kind. I can assure you, I would never allow myself to engage in promoting such booby-traps. No, Monsieur, the soundest and most respectable houses in Paris are concerned in the undertaking, both as shareholders and as guarantors——'

And Gaudissart unrolled the frippery of his phrases, while Monsieur Vernier listened with an affectation of interest that quite deceived the orator. But at the word guarantor, Vernier had, in fact, ceased to heed this bagman's rhetoric; he was bent on playing him some sly trick, so as to clear off this kind of Parisian cater-

pillar, once for all, from a district justly regarded as barbarian by speculators, who can get no footing there.

At the head of a delightful valley, known as the *Vallée coquette*, from its curves and bends, new at every step, and each more charming than the last, whether you go up or down the winding slope, there dwelt, in a little house surrounded by a vineyard, a more than half-crazy creature named Margaritis. This man, an Italian by birth, was married, but had no chlldren, and his wife took care of him with a degree of courage that was universally admired; for Madame Margaritis certainly ran some risk in living with a man who, among other manias, insisted on always having two long knives about him, not unfrequently threatening her with them. But who does not know the admirable devotion with which country people care for afflicted creatures, perhaps in consequence of the discredit that attaches to a middle-class wife if she abandons her child or her husband to the tender mercies of a public asylum? Again, the aversion is well known which country folks feel for paying a hundred louis, or perhaps a thousand crowns, the price charged at Charenton or in a private asylum. If any one spoke to Madame Margaritis of Dubuisson, Esquirol, Blanche, or other mad-doctors, she preferred, with lofty indignation, to keep her three thousand francs and her goodman.

The inexplicable caprices of this worthy's insanity being closely connected with the course of my story, it is needful to mention some of his more conspicuous vagaries. Margaritis would always go out as soon as it began to rain, to walk bareheaded among his vines. Indoors he was perpetually asking for the newspaper; just to satisfy him, his wife or the maid-servant would give him an old *Journal d'Indre-et-Loire*, and for seven years he had never discovered that it was always the same copy. A doctor might perhaps have found it interesting to note the connection between his attacks

of asking for the paper and the variations in the weather. The poor madman's constant occupation was to study the state of the sky and its effect on the vines.

When his wife had company, which was almost every evening—for the neighbours, in pity for her position, came in to play boston with her—Margaritis sat in silence in a corner, never moving; but when ten o'clock struck by a clock in a tall wooden case, he rose at the last stroke with the mechanical precision of the figures moved by a spring in a German toy, went slowly up to the card-players, looked at them with eyes strangely like the automatic gaze of the Greeks and Turks to be seen in the Boulevard du Temple in Paris, and said, 'Go away!'

At times, however, this man recovered his natural wits, and could then advise his wife very shrewdly as to the sale of her wine; but at those times he was exceedingly troublesome, stealing dainties out of the cupboards and eating them in secret.

Occasionally when the customary visitors came in, he answered their inquiries civilly, but he more often replied quite at random. To a lady who asked him, 'How are you to-day, Monsieur Margaritis?'—'I have shaved,' he would reply, 'and you?'

'Are you better, Monsieur?' another would say. 'Jerusalem! Jerusalem!' was the answer. But he usually looked at them with a blank face, not speaking a word, and then his wife would say, 'The goodman cannot hear anything to-day.' Twice or thrice in the course of five years, always about the time of the equinox, he had flown into a rage at this remark, had drawn a knife, and shrieked, 'That hussy disgraces me!'

Still, he drank, ate, and walked out like any man in perfect health; and by degrees every one was accustomed to pay him no more respect or attention than if he had been a clumsy piece of furniture.

Of all his eccentricities, there was one to which no

one had ever been able to discover a clue; for the wise heads of the district had in the course of time accounted for, or explained, most of the poor lunatic's maddest acts. He insisted on always having a sack of flour in the house, and on keeping two casks of wine from the vintage, never allowing any one to touch either the flour or the wine. But when the month of June came round, he began to be anxious to sell the sack and the wine-barrels with all the fretfulness of a madman. Madame Margaritis generally told him that she had sold the two puncheons at an exorbitant price, and gave him the money, which he then hid without his wife or his servant ever having succeeded, even by watching, in discovering the hiding-place.

The day before Gaudissart's visit to Vouvray, Madame Margaritis had had more difficulty than ever in managing her husband, who had an attack of lucid reason.

'I declare I do not know how I shall get through to-morrow,' said she to Madame Vernier. 'Only fancy, my old man insisted on seeing his two casks of wine. And he gave me no peace all day till I showed him two full puncheons. Our neighbour, Pierre Champlain, luckily had two casks he had not been able to sell, and at my request he rolled them into our cellar. And then what must he want, after seeing the casks, but nothing will content him but selling them himself.'

Madame Vernier had just been telling her husband of this difficult state of things when Gaudissart walked in. At the commercial traveller's very first words Vernier determined to let him loose on old Margaritis.

'Monsieur,' replied the dyer, when Gaudissart the Great had exhausted his first broadside, 'I will not conceal from you that your undertaking will meet with great obstacles in this district. In our part of the world the good folks go on, bodily, in a way of their own; it is a country where no new idea can ever take root. We live as our fathers did, amusing ourselves by eating four

meals a day, occupying ourselves by looking after our vineyards, and selling our wine at a good price. Our notion of business is, very honestly, to sell things for more than they cost. We shall go on in that rut, and neither God nor the devil can get us out of it. But I will give you some good advice, and good advice is worth an eye. We have in this neighbourhood a retired banker, in whose judgment I myself have the utmost confidence, and if you win his support you shall have mine. If your proposals offer any substantial prospects, and we are convinced of it, Monsieur Margaritis' vote carries mine with it, and there are twenty well-to-do houses in Vouvray where purses will be opened and your panacea will be tried.'

As she heard him mention the madman, Madame Vernier looked up at her husband.

'By the way, I believe my wife was just going to call on Madame Margaritis with a neighbour of ours. Wait a minute, and the ladies will show you the way. —You can go round and pick up Madame Fontanier,' said the old dyer with a wink at his wife.

This suggestion that she should take with her the merriest, the most voluble, the most facetious of all the merry wives of Vouvray, was as much as to tell Madame Vernier to secure a witness to report the scene which would certainly take place between the bagman and the lunatic, so as to amuse the country with it for a month to come. Monsieur and Madame Vernier played their parts so well that Gaudissart had no suspicions, and rushed headlong into the snare. He politely offered his arm to Madame Vernier, and fancied he had quite made a conquest of both ladies on the way, being dazzlingly witty, and pelting them with waggery and puns which they did not understand.

The so-called banker lived in the first house at the opening into the Vallée coquette. It was called la Fuye, and was not particularly remarkable. On the

ground floor was a large panelled sitting-room, with a bedroom on each side for the master and mistress. The entrance was through a hall, where they dined, opening into the kitchen. This ground floor, quite lacking the external elegance for which even the humblest dwellings in Touraine are noted, was crowned by attics, to which an outside stair led up, built against one of the gable ends, and covered in by a lean-to roof. A small garden, full of marigolds, seringa, and elder, divided the house from the vineyard. Round the courtyard were the buildings for the winepresses and storage.

Margaritis, seated in a yellow Utrecht velvet chair by the window in the drawing-room, did not rise as the ladies came in with Gaudissart; he was thinking of the sale of his butts of wine. He was a lean man, with a pear-shaped head, bald above the forehead, and furnished with a few hairs at the back. His deep-set eyes, shaded by thick black brows, and with dark rings round them, his nose as thin as the blade of a knife, his high cheek-bones and hollow cheeks, his generally oblong outline—everything, down to his absurdly long flat chin, contributed to give a strange look to his countenance, suggesting that of a professor of rhetoric—or of a rag-picker.

'Monsieur Margaritis,' said Madame Vernier, 'come, wake up! Here is a gentleman sent to you by my husband, and you are to hear him with attention. Put aside your mathematical calculations and talk to him.'

At this speech the madman rose, looked at Gaudissart, waved to him to be seated, and said—

'Let us talk, Monsieur.'

The three women went into Madame Margaritis' room, leaving the door open so as to hear all that went on, and intervene in case of need. Hardly were they seated when Monsieur Vernier came in quietly from the vineyard, and made them let him in through the window without a sound.

'You were in business, Monsieur?' Gaudissart began.

'Public business,' replied Margaritis, interrupting him. 'I pacified Calabria when Murat was King.'

'Heyday, he has been in Calabria now!' said Vernier in a whisper.

'Oh, indeed!' said Gaudissart. 'Then, Monsieur, we cannot fail to come to an understanding.'

'I am listening,' replied Margaritis, settling himself in the attitude of a man sitting for his portrait.

'Monsieur,' said Gaudissart, fidgeting with his watch key, which he twisted round and round without thinking of what he was doing, with a regular rotatory twirl which engaged the madman's attention, and perhaps helped to keep him quiet; 'Monsieur, if you were not a man of superior intelligence'—Margaritis bowed—'I should restrict myself to setting forth the material advantages of this concern; but its psychological value is worthy of your attention. Mark me! Of all forms of social wealth, time is the most precious; to save time is to grow rich, is it not? Now is there anything which takes up more time in our lives than anxiety as to what I may call boiling the pot—a homely metaphor, but clearly stating the question? Or is there anything which consumes more time than the lack of a guarantee to offer as security to those of whom you ask money when, though impecunious for a time, you yet are rich in prospects?'

'Money—you have come to the point.'

'Well, then, Monsieur, I am the emissary to the Departments of a company of bankers and capitalists, who have perceived what enormous loss of time, and consequently of productive intelligence and activity, is thus entailed on men with the future before them. Now, the idea has occurred to us that, to such men, we may capitalise the future, we may discount their talents, by discounting what?—why, their time, and securing

its value to their heirs. This is not merely to economise time; it is to price it, to value it, to represent in a pecuniary form the products you may expect to obtain in a certain unknown time by representing the moral qualities with which you are gifted, and which are, Monsieur, a living force, like a waterfall, or a steam engine of three, ten, twenty, fifty horse-power. This is progress, a great movement towards a better order of things, a movement due to the energy of our age—an essentially progressive age, as I can prove to you when we come to the conception of a more logical co-ordination of social interests.

'I will explain myself by tangible instances. I quit the purely abstract argument which we, in our line, call the mathematics of ideas. Supposing that instead of being a man of property, living on your dividends, you are a painter, a musician, a poet——'

'I am a painter,' the other put in by way of parenthesis.

'Very good, so be it, since you take my metaphor; you are a painter, you have a great future before you. But I am going further——'

At those words the lunatic studied Gaudissart uneasily to see if he meant to go away, but was reassured on seeing him remain seated.

'You are nothing at all,' Gaudissart went on, 'but you feel yourself——'

'I feel myself,' said Margaritis.

'You say to yourself, "I shall be a Minister"; very good. You, the painter, you, the artist, the man of letters, the future Minister, you calculate your prospects, you value them at so much—you estimate them, let us say—at a hundred thousand crowns——'

'And you have brought me a hundred thousand crowns?' said the lunatic.

'Yes, Monsieur, you will see. Either your heirs will get them without fail, in the event of your death, since

the company pledges itself to pay, or, if you live, you get them by your works of art or your fortunate speculations. Nay, if you have made a mistake, you can begin all over again. But, when once you have fixed the value, as I have had the honour of explaining to you, of your intellectual capital—for it is intellectual capital, bear that clearly in mind, Monsieur.'

'I understand,' said the madman.

'You sign a policy of insurance with this company, which credits you with the value of a hundred thousand francs—you, the painter——'

'I am a painter,' said Margaritis.

'You the musician, the Minister—and promises to pay that sum to your family, your heirs, if, in consequence of your demise, the hopes of the income to be derived from your intellectual capital should be lost. The payment of the premium is thus all that is needed to consolidate your——'

'*Your* cash-box,' said the madman, interrupting him.

'Well, of course, Monsieur; I see that you understand business.'

'Yes,' said Margaritis, 'I was the founder of the Banque Territoriale, Rue des Fossés-Montmartre in Paris, in 1798.'

'For,' Gaudissart went on, 'in order to repay the intellectual capital with which each of us credits himself, must not all who insure pay a certain premium—three per cent., annually three per cent.? And thus, by paying a very small sum, a mere nothing, you are protecting your family against the disastrous effects of your death.'

'But I am alive,' objected the lunatic.

'Ah yes, and if you live to be old—that is the objection commonly raised, the objection of the vulgar, and you must see that if we had not anticipated and annihilated it, we should be unworthy to become—what?

What are we, in fact?—The book-keepers of the great Bank of Intellect.

'Monsieur, I do not say this to you; but wherever I go, I meet with men who pretend to teach something new, to bring forward some fresh argument against those who have grown pale with studying the business—on my word of honour, it is contemptible! However, the world is made so, and I have no hope of reforming it.—Your objection, Monsieur, is absurd——'

'*Quésaco?* (What!)' said Margaritis.

'For this reason. If you should live, and if you have the money credited to you in your policy of insurance against the chances of death—you follow me——'

'I follow.'

'Well, then, it is because you have succeeded in your undertakings! And you will have succeeded solely in consequence of that policy of insurance; for, by ridding yourself of all the anxieties which are involved in having a wife at your heels, and children whom your death may reduce to beggary, you simply double your chances of success. If you are at the top of the tree, you have grasped the intellectual capital compared with which the insurance money is a trifle, a mere trifle.'

'An admirable idea!'

'Is it not, Monsieur?—I call this beneficent institution the Mutual Insurance against beggary!—or, if you prefer it, the Office for discounting Talent. For talent, sir, talent is a bill of exchange, bestowed by Nature on a man of genius, and which is often at long date—ha, hah!'

'Very handsome usury,' cried Margaritis.

'The deuce! He is sharp enough, this old boy! I have made a mistake; I must attack this man on higher ground with palaver A1,' thought Gaudissart.—'Not at all, Monsieur,' said he aloud. 'To you who——'

'Will you take a glass of wine?' asked Margaritis.

'With pleasure,' said Gaudissart.

'Wife! give us a bottle of the wine of which two casks are left.—You are here in the head-quarters of Vouvray,' said the master, pointing to his vines. 'The clos Margaritis.'

The maid brought in glasses and a bottle of the wine of 1819. The worthy lunatic filled a glass with scrupulous care, and solemnly presented it to Gaudissart, who drank it.

'But you are playing me some trick, Monsieur,' said the commercial traveller. 'This is Madeira, genuine Madeira!'

'I should think it is!' replied the lunatic. 'The only fault of the Vouvray wine, Monsieur, is that it cannot be used as an *ordinaire*, as a table wine. It is too generous, too strong; and it is sold in Paris as Madeira after being doctored with brandy. Our wine is so rich that many of the Paris merchants, when the French crop is insufficient for Holland and Belgium, buy our wine to mix with the wine grown about Paris, and so manufacture a Bordeaux wine.—But what you are drinking at this moment, my dear and very amiable sir, is fit for a king; it is the head of Vouvray. I have two casks, only two casks of it. Persons who appreciate the finest wines, high-class wines, and like to put a wine on their table which has a character not to be met with in the regular trade, apply direct to us. Now, do you happen to know any one——'

'Let us get back to our business,' said Gaudissart.

'We are there, Monsieur,' replied the madman. 'My wine is heady, and you are talking of capital; the etymology of capital is *caput*—head.—Heh?—The Head of Vouvray—the connection is obvious.'

'As I was saying,' persisted Gaudissart, 'either you have realised your intellectual capital——'

'I have realised, Monsieur.—Will you take my two puncheons? I will give you favourable terms.'

'No,' said Gaudissart the Great, 'I allude to the

insurance of intellectual capital and policies on life. I will resume the thread of my argument.'

The madman grew calmer, sat down, and looked at Gaudissart.

'I was saying, Monsieur, that if you should die, the capital is paid over to your family without difficulty.'

'Without difficulty.'

'Yes, excepting in the case of suicide——'

'A question for the law.'

'No, sir. As you know, suicide is an act that is always easily proved.'

'In France,' said Margaritis. 'But——'

'But abroad,' said Gaudissart. 'Well, Monsieur, to conclude that part of the question, I may say at once that death abroad, or on the field of battle, are not included——'

'What do you insure, then? Nothing whatever,' cried the other. 'Now, my bank was based on——'

'Nothing whatever, sir?' cried Gaudissart, interrupting him. 'Nothing whatever? How about illness, grief, poverty, and the passions? But we need not discuss exceptional cases.'

'No, we will not discuss them,' said the madman.

'What, then, is the upshot of this transaction?' exclaimed Gaudissart. 'To you, as a banker, I will simply state the figures.—You have a man, a man with a future, well dressed, living on his art—he wants money, he asks for it—a blank. Civilisation at large will refuse to advance money to this man, who, in thought, dominates over civilisation, who will some day dominate over it by his brush, his chisel, by words, or ideas, or a system. Civilisation is merciless. She has no bread for the great men who provide her with luxuries; she feeds them on abuse and mockery, the gilded slut! The expression is a strong one, but I will not retract it.—Well, your misprized great man comes to us; we recognise his great-

ness, we bow to him respectfully, we listen to him, and he says to us—

'"Gentlemen of the Insurance Company, my life is worth so much; I will pay you so much per cent. on my works."—Well, what do we do? At once, without grudging, we admit him to the splendid banquet of civilisation as an important guest——'

'Then you must have wine,' said the madman.

'As an important guest. He signs his policy, he takes our contemptible paper rags—mere miserable rags, which, rags as they are, have more power than his genius had. For, in fact, if he wants money, everybody on seeing that sheet of paper is ready to lend to him. On the Bourse, at the bankers', anywhere, even at the money-lenders', he can get money—because he can offer security.—Well, sir, was not this a gulf that needed filling in the social system?

'But, sir, this is but a part of the business undertaken by the Life Insurance Company. We also insure debtors on a different scale of premiums. We offer annuities on terms graduated by age, on an infinitely more favourable calculation than has as yet been allowed in tontines based on tables of mortality now known to be inaccurate. Our Society operating on the mass, our annuitants need have no fear of the reflections that sadden their latter years, in themselves sad enough; such thoughts as must necessarily invade them when their money is in private hands. So, you see, Monsieur, we have taken the measure of life under every aspect——'

'Sucked it at every pore,' said Margaritis.—'But take a glass of wine; you have certainly earned it. You must lay some velvet on your stomach if you want to keep your jaw in working order. And the wine of Vouvray, Monsieur, is, when old enough, pure velvet.'

'And what do you think of it all?' said Gaudissart, emptying his glass.

'It is all very fine, very new, very advantageous;

but I think better of the system of loans on land that was in use in my bank in the Rue des Fossés-Montmartre.'

'There you are right, Monsieur,' said Gaudissart, 'that has been worked and worked out, done and done again. We now have the Mortgage Society which lends on real estate, and works that system on a large scale. But is not that a mere trifle in comparison with our idea of consolidating possibilities. Consolidating hopes, coagulating—financially—each man's desires for wealth, and securing their realisation. It remained for our age, sir, an age of transition—of transition and progress combined!'

'Ay, of progress,' said the lunatic. 'I like progress, especially such as brings good times for the wine-trade——'

'The *Times—le Temps——!*' exclaimed Gaudissart, not heeding the madman's meaning. 'A poor paper, sir; if you take it in, I pity you.'

'The newspaper?' cried Margaritis. 'To be sure, I am devoted to the newspaper.—Wife, wife! where is the newspaper?' he went on, turning towards the door.

'Very good, Monsieur; if you take an interest in the papers, we shall certainly agree.'

'Yes, yes; but before you hear the paper, confess that this wine is——'

'Delicious,' said Gaudissart.

'Come on, then, we will finish the bottle between us.' The madman a quarter filled his own glass, and poured out a bumper for Gaudissart.

'As I say, sir, I have two casks of that very wine. If you think it good, and are disposed to deal——'

'The fathers of the Saint-Simonian doctrine have, in fact, commissioned me to forward them such products as—— But let me tell you of their splendid newspaper. You, who understand the insurance business, and are ready to help me to extend it in this district——'

'Certainly,' said Margaritis, 'if——'

'Of course, if I take your wine. And your wine is very good, Monsieur; it goes to the spot.'

'Champagne is made of it. There is a gentleman here, from Paris, who has come to make champagne at Tours.'

'I quite believe it.—The *Globe*, which you must have heard mentioned——'

'I know it well,' said Margaritis.

'I was sure of it,' said Gaudissart. 'Monsieur, you have a powerful head—a bump which is known as the equine head. There is something of the horse in the head of every great man. Now a man can be a genius and live unknown. It is a trick that has happened often enough to men who, in spite of their talents, live in obscurity, and which nearly befell the great Saint-Simon and Monsieur Vico, a man of mark who is making his way. He is coming on well is Vico, and I am glad. Here we enter on the new theory and formula of the human race. Attention, Monsieur——'

'Attention!' echoed Margaritis.

'The oppression of man by man ought to have ended, Monsieur, on the day when Christ—I do not say Jesus Christ, I say Christ—came to proclaim the equality of men before God. But has not this equality been hitherto the most illusory chimera?—Now, Saint-Simon supplements Christ. Christ has served His time——'

'Then, is He released?' asked Margaritis.

'He has served His time from the point of view of Liberalism. There is something stronger to guide us now—the new creed, free and individual creativeness, social co-ordination by which each one shall receive his social reward equitably, in accordance with his work, and no longer be the hireling of individuals who, incapable themselves, make *all* labour for the benefit of one alone. Hence the doctrine——'

'And what becomes of the servants?' asked Margaritis.

'They remain servants, Monsieur, if they are only capable of being servants.'

'Then of what use is the doctrine?'

'Oh, to judge of that, Monsieur, you must take your stand on the highest point of view whence you can clearly command a general prospect of humanity. This brings us to Ballanche! Do you know Monsieur Ballanche?'

'It is my principal business,' said the madman, who misunderstood the name for *la planche* (boards or staves).

'Very good,' said Gaudissart. 'Then, sir, if the palingenesis and successive developments of the spiritualised Globe touch you, delight you, appeal to you,—then, my dear sir, the newspaper called the *Globe*, a fine name, accurately expressing its mission—the *Globe* is the *cicerone* who will explain to you every morning the fresh conditions under which, in quite a short time, the world will undergo a political and moral change.'

'*Quésaco?*' said Margaritis.

'I will explain the argument by a simile,' said Gaudissart. 'If, as children, our nurses took us to Séraphin, do not we older men need a presentment of the future?—These gentlemen——'

'Do they drink wine?'

'Yes, Monsieur. Their house is established, I may say, on an admirable footing—a prophetic footing; handsome receptions, all the bigwigs, splendid parties.'

'To be sure,' said the madman, 'the labourers who pull down must be fed as well as those who build.'

'All the more so, Monsieur, when they pull down with one hand and build up with the other, as the Apostles of the *Globe* do.'

'Then they must have wine, the wine of Vouvray; the two casks I have left—three hundred bottles for a hundred francs—a mere song!'

'How much a bottle does that come to?' said Gaudissart. 'Let me see; there is the carriage, and the town dues—not seven sous—a very good bargain.' ('I have caught my man,' thought Gaudissart. 'You want to sell me the wine which I want, and I can get the whip hand of you.') 'They pay more for other wine,' he went on. 'Well, Monsieur, men who haggle are sure to agree.—Speak honestly; you have considerable influence in the district?'

'I believe so,' said the madman. 'The head of Vouvray, you see.'

'Well, and you perfectly understand the working of the Intellectual Capital Insurance?'

'Perfectly.'

'You have realised the vast proportions of the *Globe*?'

'Twice—on foot.'

Gaudissart did not heed him; he was entangled in the maze of his own thoughts, and listening to his own words, assured of success.

'Well, seeing the position you hold, I can understand that at your age you have nothing to insure. But, Monsieur, you can persuade those persons in this district to insure who, either by their personal merits or by the precarious position of their families, may be anxious to provide for the future. And so, if you will subscribe to the *Globe*, and if you will give me the support of your authority in this district to invite the investment of capital in annuities—for annuities are popular in the provinces—well, we may come to an agreement as to the purchase of the two casks of wine.—Will you take in the *Globe*?'

'I live on the Globe.'

'Will you support me with the influential residents in the district!'

'I support——'

'And——'

'And?——'

'And I—— But you will pay your subscription to the *Globe*?'

'The *Globe*—a good paper—an annuity?'

'An annuity, Monsieur?—Well, yes, you are right; for it is full of life, of vitality, and learning; choke full of learning; a handsome paper, well printed, a good colour, thick paper. Oh, it is none of your flimsy shoddy, mere waste-paper that tears if you look at it. And it goes deep, gives you reasoning that you may think over at leisure, and pleasant occupation here in the depths of the country.'

'That is the thing for me,' said the madman.

'It costs a mere trifle—eighty francs a year.'

'That is not the thing for me,' said Margaritis.

'Monsieur,' said Gaudissart, 'of course you have little children?'

'Some,' said Margaritis, who misunderstood *have* for *love*.

'Well, then, the *Journal des Enfants*, seven francs a year——'

'Buy my two casks of wine,' said Margaritis, 'and I will subscribe to your children's paper; that is the thing for me; a fine idea. Intellectual tyranny—a child—heh? Does not man tyrannise over man?'

'Right you are,' said Gaudissart.

'Right I am.'

'And you consent to steer me round the district?'

'Round the district.'

'I have your approbation?'

'You have.'

'Well, then, sir, I will take your two casks of wine at a hundred francs——'

'No, no, a hundred and ten.'

'Monsieur, a hundred and ten, I will say a hundred and ten, but it is a hundred and ten to the gentlemen of the paper and one hundred to me. If I find you a buyer, you owe me a commission.'

'A hundred and twenty to them. No commission to the commissioners.'

'Very neat. And not only witty, but spirited.'

'No, spirituous.'

'Better and better—like Nicolet.'

'That is my way,' said the lunatic. 'Come and look at my vineyards?'

'With pleasure,' said Gaudissart. 'That wine goes strangely to the head.'

And Gaudissart the Great went out with Monsieur Margaritis, who led him from terrace to terrace, from vine to vine.

The three ladies and Monsieur Vernier could laugh now at their ease, as they saw the two men from the window gesticulating, haranguing, standing still, and going on again, talking vehemently.

'Why did your good man take him out of hearing?' said Vernier. At last Margaritis came in again with the commercial traveller; they were both walking at a great pace as if in a hurry to conclude the business.

'And the countryman, I bet, has been too many for the Parisian,' said Vernier.

In point of fact, Gaudissart the Great, sitting at one end of the card-table, to the great delight of Margaritis, wrote an order for the delivery of two casks of wine. Then, after reading through the contract, Margaritis paid him down seven francs as a subscription to the children's paper.

'Till to-morrow, then, Monsieur,' said Gaudissart the Great, twisting his watch-key; 'I shall have the honour of calling for you to-morrow. You can send the wine to Paris direct to the address I have given you, and forward it as soon as you receive the money.'

Gaudissart was from Normandy; there were two sides to every bargain he made, and he required an agreement from Monsieur Margaritis, who with a madman's glee in gratifying his favourite whim, signed,

after reading, a contract to deliver two casks of wine of *Clos Margaritis*.

So Gaudissart went off in high spirits, humming *Le roi des mers, prends plus bas*, to the *Golden Sun* Inn, where he naturally had a chat with the host while waiting for dinner. Mitouflet was an old soldier, simple but cunning, as peasants are, but never laughing at a joke, as being a man who is accustomed to the roar of cannon, and to passing a jest in the ranks.

'You have some very tough customers hereabouts,' said Gaudissart, leaning against the door-post and lighting his cigar at Mitouflet's pipe.

'How is that?' asked Mitouflet.

'Well, men who ride roughshod over political and financial theories.'

'Whom have you been talking to, if I may make so bold?' asked the innkeeper guilelessly, while he skilfully expectorated after the manner of smokers.

'To a wideawake chap named Margaritis.'

Mitouflet glanced at his customer, twice, with calm irony.

'Oh yes, he is wideawake, no doubt! He knows too much for most people; they don't follow him——'

'I can quite believe it. He has a thorough knowledge of the higher branches of finance.'

'Yes, indeed,' said Mitouflet; 'and for my part, I have always thought it a pity that he should be mad.'

'Mad? How?'

'How? Why, mad, as a madman is mad,' repeated the innkeeper. 'But he is not dangerous, and his wife looks after him.—So you understood each other? That's funny,' said the relentless Mitouflet, with the utmost calm.

'Funny?' cried Gaudissart. 'Funny? But your precious Monsieur Vernier was making a fool of me!'

'Did he send you there?' said Mitouflet.

'Yes.'

'I say, wife,' cried the innkeeper, 'listen to that! Monsieur Vernier actually sent Monsieur to talk to old Margaritis——'

'And what did you find to say to each other, my good gentleman,' said the woman, 'since he is quite mad?'

'He sold me two casks of wine.'

'And you bought them?'

'Yes.'

'But it is his mania to want to sell wine; he has none.'

'Very good!' cried the bagman. 'In the first place, I will go and thank Monsieur Vernier.'

Gaudissart, boiling with rage, went off to the house of the ex-dyer, whom he found in his parlour laughing with the neighbours, to whom he was already telling the story.

'Monsieur,' said this Prince of Bagmen, his eyes glaring with wrath, 'you are a sneak and a blackguard; and if you are not the lowest of turnkeys—a class I rank below the convicts—you will give me satisfaction for the insult you have done me by placing me in the power of a man whom you knew to be mad. Do you hear me, Monsieur Vernier, the dyer?'

This was the speech Gaudissart had prepared, as a tragedian prepares his entrance on the stage.

'What next?' retorted Vernier, encouraged by the presence of his neighbours. 'Do you think we have not good right to make game of a gentleman who arrives at Vouvray with an air and a flourish, to get our money out of us under pretence of being great men—painters, or verse-mongers—and who thus gratuitously places us on a level with a penniless horde, out at elbows, homeless and roofless? What have we done to deserve it, we who are fathers of families? A rogue, who asks us to subscribe to the *Globe*, a paper which preaches as the first law of God, if you please, that a man shall not

inherit what his father and mother can leave him? On my sacred word of honour, old Margaritis can talk more sense than that.

'And, after all, what have you to complain of? You were quite of a mind, you and he. These gentlemen can bear witness that if you had speechified to all the people in the country-side you would not have been so well understood.'

'That is all very well to say, but I consider myself insulted, Monsieur, and I expect satisfaction.'

'Very good, sir; I consider you insulted if that will be any comfort to you, and I will not give you satisfaction, for there is not satisfaction enough in the whole silly business for me to give you any. Is he absurd, I ask you?'

At these words Gaudissart rushed on the dyer to give him a blow; but the Vouvrillons were on the alert, and threw themselves between them, so that Gaudissart the Great only hit the dyer's wig, which flew off and alighted on the head of Mademoiselle Claire Vernier.

'If you are not satisfied now, Monsieur, I shall be at the inn till to-morrow morning; you will find me there, and ready to show you what is meant by satisfaction for an insult. I fought in July, Monsieur!'

'Very well,' said the dyer, 'you shall fight at Vouvray; and you will stay here rather longer than you bargained for.'

Gaudissart departed, pondering on this reply, which seemed to him ominous of mischief. For the first time in his life he dined cheerlessly.

The whole borough of Vouvray was in a stir over the meeting between Gaudissart and Monsieur Vernier. A duel was a thing unheard of in this benign region.

'Monsieur Mitouflet, I am going to fight Monsieur Vernier to-morrow morning,' said Gaudissart to his host. 'I know nobody here; will you be my second?'

'With pleasure,' said Mitouflet.

Gaudissart had hardly finished his dinner when Madame Fontanieu and the Mayor's deputy came to the *Golden Sun*, took Mitouflet aside, and represented to him what a sad thing it would be for the whole district if a violent death should occur; they described the frightful state of affairs for good Madame Vernier, and implored him to patch the matter up so as to save the honour of the community.

'I will see to it,' said the innkeeper with a wink.

In the evening Mitouflet went up to Gaudissart's room carrying pens, ink, and paper.

'What is all that?' asked Gaudissart.

'Well, as you are to fight to-morrow, I thought you might be glad to leave some little instructions, and that you might wish to write some letters, for we all have some one who is dear to us. Oh! that will not kill you. Are you a good fencer? Would you like to practise a little? I have some foils.'

'I should be glad to do so.'

Mitouflet fetched the foils and two masks.

'Now, let us see.'

The innkeeper and the bagman stood on guard. Mitouflet, who had been an instructor of grenadiers, hit Gaudissart sixty-eight times, driving him back to the wall.

'The devil! you are good at the game!' said Gaudissart, out of breath.

'I am no match for Monsieur Vernier.'

'The deuce! Then I will fight with pistols.'

'I advise you to.—You see, if you use large horse pistols and load them to the muzzle, thay are sure to kick and miss, and each man withdraws with unblemished honour. Leave me to arrange it. By the Mass, two good men would be great fools to kill each other for a jest.'

'Are you sure the pistols will fire wide enough? I should be sorry to kill the man,' said Gaudissart.

'Sleep easy.'

Next morning the adversaries, both rather pale, met at the foot of the Pont de la Cise.

The worthy Vernier narrowly missed killing a cow that was grazing by the roadside ten yards off.

'Ah! you fired in the air!' exclaimed Gaudissart, and with these words the enemies fell into each other's arms.

'Monsieur,' said the traveller, 'your joke was a little rough, but it was funny. I am sorry I spoke so strongly, but I was beside myself.—I hold you a man of honour.'

'Monsieur, we will get you twenty subscribers to the children's paper,' replied the dyer, still rather pale.

'That being the case,' said Gaudissart, 'why should we not breakfast together? Men who have fought are always ready to understand each other.'

'Monsieur Mitouflet,' said Gaudissart, as they went in, 'there is a bailiff here, I suppose?'

'What for?'

'I mean to serve a notice on my dear little Monsieur Margaritis, requiring him to supply me with two casks of his wine.'

'But he has *none*,' said Vernier.

'Well, Monsieur, I will say no more about it for an indemnity of twenty francs. But I will not have it said in your town that you stole a march on Gaudissart the Great.'

Madame Margaritis, afraid of an action, which the plaintiff would certainly gain, brought the twenty francs to the clement bagman, who was also spared the pains of any further propaganda in one of the most jovial districts of France, and at the same time the least open to new ideas.

On his return from his tour in the southern provinces, Gaudissart the Great was travelling in the coupé of the Laffite-Caillard diligence, and had for a fellow passenger a young man to whom, having passed Angoulême, he

condescended to expatiate on the mysteries of life, fancying him, no doubt, but a baby.

On reaching Vouvray, the youth exclaimed—

'What a lovely situation!'

'Yes, Monsieur,' said Gaudissart, 'but the land is uninhabitable by reason of the inhabitants. You would have a duel on your hands every day. Why, only three months ago I fought on that very spot'—and he pointed to the bridge—'with a confounded dyer—pistols; but —I fleeced him!'

PARIS, *November* 1832.

THE MUSE OF THE DEPARTMENT

TO MONSIEUR LE COMTE FERDINAND DE GRAMONT

My dear Ferdinand,—If the chances of the world of literature—habent sua fata libelli—*should allow these lines to be an enduring record, that will still be but a trifle in return for the trouble you have taken—you, the Hozier, the Chérin, the King-at-Arms of these Studies of Life; you, to whom the Navarreins, Cadignans, Langeais, Blamont-Chauvrys, Chaulieus, Arthez, Esgrignons, Mortsaufs, Valois—the hundred great names that form the Aristocracy of the 'Human Comedy' owe their lordly mottoes and ingenious armorial bearings. Indeed, 'the Armorial of the Études, devised by Ferdinand de Gramont, gentleman,' is a complete manual of French Heraldry, in which nothing is forgotten, not even the arms of the Empire, and I shall preserve it as a monument of friendship and of Benedictine patience. What profound knowledge of the old feudal spirit is to be seen in the motto of the Bauséants,* Pulchrè sedens, melius agens; *in that of the Espards,* Des partem leonis; *in that of the Vandenesses,* Ne se vend. *And what elegance in the thousand details of the learned symbolism which will always show how far accuracy has been carried in my work, to which you, the poet, have contributed.*

Your old friend,

De Balzac.

On the skirts of Le Berry stands a town which, watered by the Loire, infallibly attracts the traveller's eye. Sancerre crowns the topmost height of a chain of hills, the last of the range that gives variety to the Nivernais. The Loire floods the flats at the foot of these slopes, leaving a yellow alluvium that is extremely fertile, excepting in those places where it has deluged them with sand and destroyed them for ever, by one of those terrible risings which are also incidental to the Vistula—the Loire of the northern coast.

The hill on which the houses of Sancerre are grouped is so far from the river that the little river-port of Saint-Thibault thrives on the life of Sancerre. There wine is shipped and oak staves are landed, with all the produce brought from the upper and lower Loire. At the period when this story begins the suspension bridges at Cosne and at Saint-Thibault were already built. Travellers from Paris to Sancerre by the southern road were no longer ferried across the river from Cosne to Saint-Thibault; and this of itself is enough to show that the great cross-shuffle of 1830 was a thing of the past, for the House of Orleans has always had a care for substantial improvements, though somewhat after the fashion of a husband who makes his wife presents out of her marriage portion.

Excepting that part of Sancerre which occupies the little plateau, the streets are more or less steep, and the town is surrounded by slopes known as the Great Ramparts, a name which shows that they are the high roads of the place.

Outside the ramparts lies a belt of vineyards. Wine forms the chief industry and the most important trade of the country, which yields several vintages of high-class wine full of aroma, and so nearly resembling the

wines of Burgundy, that the vulgar palate is deceived. So Sancerre finds in the wine-shops of Paris the quick market indispensable for liquor that will not keep for more than seven or eight years. Below the town lie a few villages, Fontenoy and Saint-Satur, almost suburbs, reminding us by their situation of the smiling vineyards about Neufchâtel in Switzerland.

The town still bears much of its ancient aspect; the streets are narrow and paved with pebbles carted up from the Loire. Some old houses are to be seen there. The citadel, a relic of military power and feudal times, stood one of the most terrible sieges of our religious wars, when French Calvinists far outdid the ferocious Cameronians of Walter Scott's tales.

The town of Sancerre, rich in its greater past, but widowed now of its military importance, is doomed to an even less glorious future, for the course of trade lies on the right bank of the Loire. The sketch here given shows that Sancerre will be left more and more lonely in spite of the two bridges connecting it with Cosne.

Sancerre, the pride of the left bank, numbers three thousand five hundred inhabitants at most, while at Cosne there are now more than six thousand. Within half a century the part played by these two towns standing opposite each other has been reversed. The advantage of situation, however, remains with the historic town, whence the view on every side is perfectly enchanting, where the air is deliciously pure, the vegetation splendid, and the residents, in harmony with nature, are friendly souls, good fellows, and devoid of Puritanism, though two-thirds of the population are Calvinists. Under such conditions, though there are the usual disadvantages of life in a small town, and each one lives under the officious eye which makes private life almost a public concern, on the other hand, the spirit of township—a sort of patriotism, which cannot

indeed take the place of a love of home—flourishes triumphantly.

Thus the town of Sancerre is exceedingly proud of having given birth to one of the glories of modern medicine, Horace Bianchon, and to an author of secondary rank, Etienne Lousteau, one of our most successful journalists. The district included under the municipality of Sancerre, distressed at finding itself practically ruled by seven or eight large landowners, the wirepullers of the elections, tried to shake off the electoral yoke of a creed which had reduced it to a rotten borough. This little conspiracy, plotted by a handful of men whose vanity was provoked, failed through the jealousy which the elevation of one of them, as the inevitable result, roused in the breasts of the others. This result showed the radical defect of the scheme, and the remedy then suggested was to rally round a champion at the next election, in the person of one of the two men who so gloriously represented Sancerre in Paris circles.

This idea was extraordinarily advanced for the provinces, for since 1830 the nomination of parochial dignitaries has increased so greatly that real statesmen are becoming rare indeed in the lower chamber.

In point of fact, this plan, of very doubtful outcome, was hatched in the brain of the Superior Woman of the borough, *dux femina fasti*, but with a view to personal interest. This idea was so widely rooted in this lady's past life, and so entirely comprehended her future prospects, that it can scarcely be understood without some sketch of her antecedent career.

Sancerre at that time could boast of a Superior Woman, long misprized indeed, but now, about 1836, enjoying a pretty extensive local reputation. This, too, was the period at which the two Sancerrois in Paris were attaining, each in his own line, to the highest

degree of glory for one, and of fashion for the other. Etienne Lousteau, a writer in reviews, signed his name to contributions to a paper that had eight thousand subscribers; and Bianchon, already chief physician to a hospital, Officer of the Legion of Honour, and member of the Academy of Sciences, had just been made a professor.

If it were not that the word would to many readers seem to imply a degree of blame, it might be said that George Sand created *Sandism*, so true is it that, morally speaking, all good has a reverse of evil. This leprosy of sentimentality has spoilt many women, who, but for her pretensions to genius, would have been charming. Still, *Sandism* has its good side, in that the woman attacked by it bases her assumption of superiority on feelings scorned; she is a blue-stocking of sentiment; and she is rather less of a bore, love to some extent neutralising literature. The most conspicuous result of George Sand's celebrity was to elicit the fact that France has a perfectly enormous number of superior women, who have, however, till now been so generous as to leave the field to the Maréchal de Saxe's granddaughter.

The Superior Woman of Sancerre lived at La Baudraye, a town-house and country-house in one, within ten minutes of the town, and in the village, or, if you will, the suburb of Saint-Satur. The La Baudrayes of the present day have, as is frequently the case, thrust themselves in, and are but a substitute for those La Baudrayes whose name, glorious in the Crusades, figured in the chief events of the history of Le Berry.

The story must be told.

In the time of Louis XIV. a certain sheriff named Milaud, whose forefathers had been furious Calvinists, was converted at the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. To encourage this movement in one of the strongholds of Calvinism, the King gave the said Milaud

a good appointment in the 'Waters and Forests,' granted him arms and the title of Sire (or Lord) de La Baudraye, with the fief of the old and genuine La Baudrayes. The descendants of the famous Captain La Baudraye fell, sad to say, into one of the snares laid for heretics by the new decrees, and were hanged—an unworthy deed of the great King's.

Under Louis xv. Milaud de la Baudraye, from being a mere squire, was made Chevalier, and had influence enough to obtain for his son a cornet's commission in the Musketeers. This officer perished at Fontenoy, leaving a child, to whom King Louis xvi. subsequently granted the privileges, by patent, of a farmer-general, in remembrance of his father's death on the field of battle.

This financier, a fashionable wit, great at charades, capping verses, and posies to Chlora, lived in society, was a hanger-on to the Duc de Nivernais, and fancied himself obliged to follow the nobility into exile; but he took care to carry his money with him. Thus the rich émigré was able to assist more than one family of high rank.

In 1800, tired of hoping, and perhaps tired of lending, he returned to Sancerre, bought back La Baudraye out of a feeling of vanity and imaginary pride, quite intelligible in a sheriff's grandson, though under the consulate his prospects were but slender; all the more so, indeed, because the ex-farmer-general had small hopes of his heir's perpetuating the new race of La Baudraye.

Jean Athanase Polydore Milaud de la Baudraye, his only son, more than delicate from his birth, was very evidently the child of a man whose constitution had early been exhausted by the excesses in which rich men indulge, who then marry at the first stage of premature old age, and thus bring degeneracy into the highest circles of society. During the years of the emigration Madame de la Baudraye, a girl of no fortune, chosen for her noble birth, had patiently reared this sallow, sickly

boy, for whom she had the devoted love mothers feel for such changeling creatures. Her death—she was a Casteran de la Tour—contributed to bring about Monsieur de la Baudraye's return to France.

This Lucullus of the Milauds, when he died, left his son the fief, stripped indeed of its fines and dues, but graced with weathercocks bearing his coat-of-arms, a thousand louis-d'or—in 1802 a considerable sum of money—and certain receipts for claims on very distinguished émigrés enclosed in a pocket-book full of verses, with this inscription on the wrapper, *Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas.*

Young La Baudraye did not die, but he owed his life to habits of monastic strictness; to the economy of action which Fontenelle preached as the religion of the invalid; and, above all, to the air of Sancerre and the influence of its fine elevation, whence a panorama over the valley of the Loire may be seen extending for forty leagues.

From 1802 to 1815 young La Baudraye added several plots to his vineyards, and devoted himself to the culture of the vine. The Restoration seemed to him at first so insecure that he dared not go to Paris to claim his debts; but after Napoleon's death he tried to turn his father's collection of autographs into money, though not understanding the deep philosophy which had thus mixed up I O U's and copies of verses. But the winegrower lost so much time in impressing his identity on the Duke of Navarreins 'and others,' as he phrased it, that he came back to Sancerre, to his beloved vintage, without having obtained anything but offers of service.

The Restoration had raised the nobility to such a degree of lustre as made La Baudraye wish to justify his ambitions by having an heir. This happy result of matrimony he considered doubtful, or he would not so long have postponed the step; however, finding himself still above ground in 1823, at the age of forty-three, a

length of years which no doctor, astrologer, or midwife would have dared to promise him, he hoped to earn the reward of his sober life. And yet his choice showed such a lack of prudence in regard to his frail constitution, that the malicious wit of a country town could not help thinking it must be the result of some deep calculation.

Just at this time His Eminence, Monseigneur the Archbishop of Bourges, had converted to the Catholic faith a young person, the daughter of one of the citizen families, who were the first upholders of Calvinism, and who, thanks to their obscurity or to some compromise with Heaven, had escaped from the persecutions under Louis XIV. The Piédefers—a name that was obviously one of the quaint nicknames assumed by the champions of the Reformation—had set up as highly respectable cloth merchants. But in the reign of Louis XVI., Abraham Piédefer fell into difficulties, and at his death in 1786 left his two children in extreme poverty. One of them, Tobie Piédefer, went out to the Indies, leaving the pittance they had inherited to his elder brother. During the Revolution Moïse Piédefer bought up the nationalised land, pulled down abbeys and churches with all the zeal of his ancestors, oddly enough, and married a Catholic, the only daughter of a member of the Convention who had perished on the scaffold. This ambitious Piédefer died in 1819, leaving his wife a fortune impaired by agricultural speculation, and a little girl of remarkable beauty. This child, brought up in the Calvinist faith, was named Dinah, in accordance with the custom in use among the sect, of taking their Christian names from the Bible, so as to have nothing in common with the Saints of the Roman Church.

Mademoiselle Dinah Piédefer was placed by her mother in one of the best schools in Bourges, that kept by the Demoiselles Chamarolles, and was soon as highly distinguished for the qualities of her mind as for her beauty ; but she found herself snubbed by girls of birth

and fortune, destined by-and-by to play a greater part in the world than a mere plebeian, the daughter of a mother who was dependent on the settlement of Piédefer's estate. Dinah, having raised herself for the moment above her companions, now aimed at remaining on a level with them for the rest of her life. She determined, therefore, to renounce Calvinism, in the hope that the Cardinal would extend his favour to his proselyte and interest himself in her prospects. You may from this judge of Mademoiselle Dinah's superiority, since at the age of seventeen she was a convert solely from ambition.

The Archbishop, possessed with the idea that Dinah Piédefer would adorn society, was anxious to see her married. But every family to whom the prelate made advances took fright at a damsel gifted with the looks of a princess, who was reputed the cleverest of Mademoiselle Chamarolles' pupils, and who, at the somewhat theatrical ceremonial of prize-giving, always took a leading part. A thousand crowns a year, which was as much as she could hope for from the estate of La Hautoy when divided between the mother and daughter, would be a mere trifle in comparison with the expenses into which a husband would be led by the personal advantages of so brilliant a creature.

As soon as all these facts came to the ears of little Polydore de La Baudraye—for they were the talk of every circle in the Department of the Cher—he went to Bourges just when Madame Piédefer, a devotee at high services, had almost made up her own mind and her daughter's to take the first comer with well-lined pockets—the first *chien coiffé*, as they say in Le Berry. And if the Cardinal was delighted to receive Monsieur de La Baudraye, Monsieur de La Baudraye was even better pleased to receive a wife from the hands of the Cardinal. The little gentleman only demanded of His Eminence a formal promise to support his claims with the President of the Council to enable him to recover

his debts from the Duc de Navarreins 'and others' by a lien on their indemnities. This method, however, seemed to the able Minister then occupying the Pavillon Marsan rather too sharp practice, and he gave the vine-owner to understand that his business should be attended to all in good time.

It is easy to imagine the excitement produced in the Sancerre district by the news of Monsieur de La Baudraye's imprudent marriage.

'It is quite intelligible,' said Président Boirouge; 'the little man was very much startled, as I am told, at hearing that handsome young Milaud, the Attorney-General's deputy at Nevers, say to Monsieur de Clagny as they were looking at the turrets of La Baudraye, "That will be mine some day."—"But," says Clagny, "he may marry and have children."—"Impossible!"—So you may imagine how such a changeling as little La Baudraye must hate that colossal Milaud.'

There was at Nevers a plebeian branch of the Milauds, which had grown so rich in the cutlery trade that the present representative of that branch had been brought up to the civil service, in which he had enjoyed the patronage of Marchangy, now dead.

It will be as well to eliminate from this story, in which moral developments play the principal part, the baser material interests which alone occupied Monsieur de La Baudraye, by briefly relating the results of his negotiations in Paris. This will also throw light on certain mysterious phenomena of contemporary history, and the underground difficulties in matters of politics which hampered the Ministry at the time of the Restoration.

The promises of Ministers were so illusory that Monsieur de La Baudraye determined on going to Paris at the time when the Cardinal's presence was required there by the sitting of the Chambers.

This is how the Duc de Navarreins, the principal debtor threatened by Monsieur de La Baudraye, got out of the scrape.

The country gentleman, lodging at the Hôtel de Mayence, Rue Saint-Honoré, near the Place Vendôme, one morning received a visit from a confidential agent of the Ministry, who was an expert in 'winding up' business. This elegant personage, who stepped out of an elegant cab, and was dressed in the most elegant style, was requested to walk up to No. 37—that is to say, to the third floor, to a small room where he found his provincial concocting a cup of coffee over his bedroom fire.

'Is it to Monsieur Milaud de La Baudraye that I have the honour—— ?'

'Yes,' said the little man, draping himself in his dressing gown.

After examining this garment, the illicit offspring of an old chiné wrapper of Madame Piédefer's and a gown of the late lamented Madame de La Baudraye, the emissary considered the man, the dressing gown, and the little stove on which the milk was boiling in a tin saucepan, as so homogeneous and characteristic that he deemed it needless to beat about the bush.

'I will lay a wager, Monsieur,' said he audaciously, 'that you dine for forty sous at Hurbain's in the Palais Royal.'

'Pray, why?'

'Oh, I know you, having seen you there,' replied the Parisian with perfect gravity. 'All the princes' creditors dine there. You know that you recover scarcely ten per cent. on debts from these fine gentlemen. I would not give you five per cent. on a debt to be recovered from the estate of the late Duc d'Orléans—nor even,' he added in a low voice—'from MONSIEUR.'

'So you have come to buy up the bills?' said La Baudraye, thinking himself very clever.

'Buy them!' said his visitor. 'Why, what do you take me for? I am Monsieur des Lupeaulx, Master of Appeals, Secretary-General to the Ministry, and I have come to propose an arrangement.'

'What is that?'

'Of course, Monsieur, you know the position of your debtor——'

'Of my debtors——'

'Well, Monsieur, you understand the position of your debtors; they stand high in the King's good graces, but they have no money, and are obliged to make a good show.—Again, you know the difficulties of the political situation. The aristocracy has to be rehabilitated in the face of a very strong force of the third estate. The King's idea—and France does him scant justice—is to create a peerage as a national institution analogous to the English peerage. To realise this grand idea, we need years—and millions.—*Noblesse oblige.* The Duc de Navarreins, who is, as you know, first gentleman of the Bedchamber to the King, does not repudiate his debt; but he cannot—Now, be reasonable.—Consider the state of politics. We are emerging from the pit of Revolution. —And you yourself are noble—He simply cannot pay——'

'Monsieur——'

'You are hasty,' said des Lupeaulx. 'Listen. He cannot pay in money. Well, then; you, a clever man, can take payment in favours—Royal or Ministerial.'

'What! When in 1793 my father put down one hundred thousand——'

'My dear sir, recrimination is useless. Listen to a simple statement in political arithmetic: The collectorship at Sancerre is vacant; a certain paymaster-general of the forces has a claim on it, but he has no chance of getting it; you have the chance—and no claim. You will get the place. You will hold it for three months, you will then resign, and Monsieur Gravier will give

twenty thousand francs for it. In addition, the Order of the Legion of Honour will be conferred on you.'

'Well, that is something,' said the wine-grower, tempted by the money rather than by the red ribbon.

'But then,' said des Lupeaulx, 'you must show your gratitude to His Excellency by restoring to Monseigneur the Duc de Navarreins all your claims on him.'

La Baudraye returned to Sancerre as Collector of Taxes. Six months later he was superseded by Monsieur Gravier, regarded as one of the most agreeable financiers who had served under the Empire, and who was of course presented by Monsieur de La Baudraye to his wife.

As soon as he was released from his functions, Monsieur de la Baudraye returned to Paris to come to an understanding with some other debtors. This time he was made a Referendary under the Great Seal, Baron, and Officer of the Legion of Honour. He sold the appointment as Referendary; and then the Baron de La Baudraye called on his last remaining debtors, and reappeared at Sancerre as Master of Appeals, with an appointment as Royal Commissioner to a commercial association established in the Nivernais, at a salary of six thousand francs, an absolute sinecure. So the worthy La Baudraye, who was supposed to have committed a financial blunder, had, in fact, done very good business in the choice of a wife.

Thanks to sordid economy and an indemnity paid him for the estate belonging to his father, nationalised and sold in 1793, by the year 1827 the little man could realise the dream of his whole life. By paying four hundred thousand francs down, and binding himself to further instalments, which compelled him to live for six years on the air as it came, to use his own expression, he was able to purchase the estate of Anzy on the banks of the Loire, about two leagues above Sancerre, and its magnificent castle built by Philibert de l'Orme, the

admiration of every connoisseur, and for five centuries the property of the Uxelles family. At last he was one of the great landowners of the province! It is not absolutely certain that the satisfaction of knowing that an entail had been created, by letters patent dated back to December 1820, including the estates of Anzy, of La Baudraye, and of La Hautoy, was any compensation to Dinah on finding herself reduced to unconfessed penuriousness till 1835.

This sketch of the financial policy of the first Baron de La Baudraye explains the man completely. Those who are familiar with the manias of country folks will recognise in him the *land-hunger* which becomes such a consuming passion to the exclusion of every other; a sort of avarice displayed in the sight of the sun, which often leads to ruin by a want of balance between the interest on mortgages and the products of the soil. Those who, from 1802 till 1827, had merely laughed at the little man as they saw him trotting to Saint-Thibault and attending to his business, like a merchant living on his vineyards, found the answer to the riddle when the ant-lion seized his prey, after waiting for the day when the extravagance of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse culminated in the sale of that splendid property.

Madame Piédefer came to live with her daughter. The combined fortunes of Monsieur de la Baudraye and his mother-in-law, who had been content to accept an annuity of twelve hundred francs on the lands of La Hautoy which she handed over to him, amounted to an acknowledged income of about fifteen thousand francs.

During the early days of her married life, Dinah had effected some alterations which had made the house at La Baudraye a very pleasant residence. She turned a spacious forecourt into a formal garden, pulling down wine-stores, presses, and shabby outhouses. Behind the manor-house, which, though small, did not lack

style with its turrets and gables, she laid out a second garden with shrubs, flower-beds, and lawns, and divided it from the vineyards by a wall hidden under creepers. She also made everything within doors as comfortable as their narrow circumstances allowed.

In order not to be ruined by a young lady so very superior as Dinah seemed to be, Monsieur de La Baudraye was shrewd enough to say nothing as to the recovery of debts in Paris. This dead secrecy as to his money matters gave a touch of mystery to his character, and lent him dignity in his wife's eyes during the first years of their married life—so majestic is silence!

The alterations effected at La Baudraye made everybody eager to see the young mistress, all the more so because Dinah would never show herself, nor receive any company, before she felt quite settled in her home and had thoroughly studied the inhabitants, and, above all, her taciturn husband. When, one spring morning in 1825, pretty Madame de La Baudraye was first seen walking on the Mall in a blue velvet dress, with her mother in black velvet, there was quite an excitement in Sancerre. This dress confirmed the young woman's reputation for superiority, brought up, as she had been, in the capital of Le Berry. Every one was afraid lest in entertaining this phœnix of the Department, the conversation should not be clever enough; and, of course, everybody was constrained in the presence of Madame de La Baudraye, who produced a sort of terror among the women-folk. As they admired a carpet of Indian shawl-pattern in the La Baudraye drawing-room, a Pompadour writing-table carved and gilt, brocade window curtains, and a Japanese bowl full of flowers on the round table among a selection of the newest books; when they heard the fair Dinah playing at sight, without making the smallest demur before seating herself at the piano, the idea they conceived of her superiority assumed vast proportions. That she might never allow

herself to become careless or the victim of bad taste, Dinah had determined to keep herself up to the mark as to the fashions and latest developments of luxury by an active correspondence with Anna Grossetête, her bosom friend at Mademoiselle Chamarolles' school.

Anna, thanks to a fine fortune, had married the Comte de Fontaine's third son. Thus those ladies who visited at La Baudraye were perpetually piqued by Dinah's success in leading the fashion; do what they would, they were always behind, or, as they say on the turf, distanced.

While all these trifles gave rise to malignant envy in the ladies of Sancerre, Dinah's conversation and wit engendered absolute aversion. In her ambition to keep her mind on the level of Parisian brilliancy, Madame de La Baudraye allowed no vacuous small talk in her presence, no old-fashioned compliments, no pointless remarks; she would never endure the yelping of tittle-tattle, the backstairs slander which forms the staple of talk in the country. She liked to hear of discoveries in science or art, or the latest pieces at the theatres, the newest poems, and by airing the cant words of the day she made a show of uttering thoughts.

The Abbé Duret, Curé of Sancerre, an old man of a lost type of clergy in France, a man of the world with a liking for cards, had not dared to indulge this taste in so liberal a district as Sancerre; he, therefore, was delighted at Madame de La Baudraye's coming, and they got on together to admiration. The *sous-préfet*, one Vicomte de Chargebœuf, was delighted to find in Madame de La Baudraye's drawing-room a sort of oasis where there was a truce to provincial life. As to Monsieur de Clagny, the Public Prosecutor, his admiration for the fair Dinah kept him bound to Sancerre. The enthusiastic lawyer refused all promotion, and became a quite pious adorer of this angel of grace and beauty. He was a tall, lean man, with a minatory countenance set off

by terrible eyes in deep black circles, under enormous eyebrows; and his eloquence, very unlike his love-making, could be incisive.

Monsieur Gravier was a little, round man, who, in the days of the Empire had been a charming ballad-singer ; it was this accomplishment that had won him the high position of Paymaster-General of the forces. Having mixed himself up in certain important matters in Spain with generals at that time in opposition, he had made the most of these connections to the Minister, who, in consideration of the place he had lost, promised him the Receivership at Sancerre, and then allowed him to pay for the appointment. The frivolous spirit and light tone of the Empire had become ponderous in Monsieur Gravier; he did not, or would not, understand the wide difference between manners under the Restoration and under the Empire. Still, he conceived of himself as far superior to Monsieur de Clagny ; his style was in better taste ; he followed the fashion, was to be seen in a buff waistcoat, grey trousers, and neat, tightly-fitting coats ; he wore a fashionable silk tie slipped through a diamond ring, while the lawyer never dressed in anything but black—coat, trousers, and waistcoat alike, and those often shabby.

These four men were the first to go into ecstasies over Dinah's cultivation, good taste, and refinement, and pronounced her a woman of most superior mind. Then the women said to each other, 'Madame de La Baudraye must laugh at us behind our back.'

This view, which was more or less correct, kept them from visiting at La Baudraye. Dinah, attainted and convicted of pedantry, because she spoke grammatically, was nicknamed the Sappho of Saint-Satur. At last everybody made insolent game of the great qualities of the woman who had thus roused the enmity of the ladies of Sancerre. And they ended by denying a superiority—after all, merely comparative !—which emphasised their ignorance, and did not forgive it. Where the whole

population is hunch-backed, a straight shape is the monstrosity; Dinah was regarded as monstrous and dangerous, and she found herself in a desert.

Astonished at seeing the women of the neighbourhood only at long intervals, and for visits of a few minutes, Dinah asked Monsieur de Clagny the reason of this state of things.

'You are too superior a woman to be liked by other women,' said the lawyer.

Monsieur Gravier, when questioned by the forlorn fair, only, after much entreaty, replied—

'Well, lady fair, you are not satisfied to be merely charming. You are clever and well educated, you know every book that comes out, you love poetry, you are a musician, and you talk delightfully. Women cannot forgive so much superiority.'

Men said to Monsieur de La Baudraye—

'You who have such a Superior Woman for a wife are very fortunate——' And at last he himself would say—

'I who have a Superior Woman for a wife, am very fortunate,' etc.

Madame Piédefer, flattered through her daughter, also allowed herself to say such things—'My daughter, who is a very Superior Woman, was writing yesterday to Madame de Fontaine such and such a thing.'

Those who know the world—France, Paris—know how true it is that many celebrities are thus created.

Two years later, by the end of the year 1825, Dinah de La Baudraye was accused of not choosing to have any visitors but men; then it was said that she did not care for women—and that was a crime. Not a thing she could do, not her most trifling action, could escape criticism and misrepresentation. After making every sacrifice that a well-bred woman can make, and placing herself entirely in the right, Madame de La Baudraye

was so rash as to say to a false friend who condoled with her on her isolation—

'I would rather have my bowl empty than with anything in it!'

This speech produced a terrible effect on Sancerre, and was cruelly retorted on the Sappho of Saint-Satur when, seeing her childless after five years of married life, *little* de La Baudraye became a byword for laughter. To understand this provincial witticism, readers may be reminded of the Bailli de Ferrette—some, no doubt, having known him—of whom it was said that he was the bravest man in Europe for daring to walk on his legs, and who was accused of putting lead in his shoes to save himself from being blown away. Monsieur de La Baudraye, a sallow and almost diaphanous creature, would have been engaged by the Bailli de Ferrette as first gentleman-in-waiting if that diplomatist had been the Grand Duke of Baden instead of being merely his envoy.

Monsieur de La Baudraye, whose legs were so thin that, for mere decency, he wore false calves, whose thighs were like the arms of an average man, whose body was not unlike that of a cockchafer, would have been an advantageous foil to the Bailli de Ferrette. As he walked, the little vine-owner's leg-pads often twisted round on to his shins, so little did he make a secret of them, and he would thank any one who warned him of this little mishap. He wore knee-breeches, black silk stockings, and a white waistcoat till 1824. After his marriage he adopted blue trousers and boots with heels, which made Sancerre declare that he had added two inches to his stature that he might come up to his wife's chin. For ten years he was always seen in the same little bottle-green coat with large white-metal buttons, and a black stock that accentuated his cold stingy face, lighted up by grey-blue eyes as keen and passionless as a cat's. Being very gentle, as men are

who act on a fixed plan of conduct, he seemed to make his wife happy by never contradicting her; he allowed her to do the talking, and was satisfied to move with the deliberate tenacity of an insect.

Dinah, adored for her beauty, in which she had no rival, and admired for her cleverness by the most gentlemanly men of the place, encouraged their admiration by conversations, for which, it was subsequently asserted, she prepared herself beforehand. Finding herself listened to with rapture, she soon began to listen to herself, enjoyed haranguing her audience, and at last regarded her friends as the chorus in a tragedy, there only to give her her cues. In fact, she had a very fine collection of phrases and ideas, derived either from books or by assimilating the opinions of her companions, and thus became a sort of mechanical instrument, going off on a round of phrases as soon as some chance remark released the spring. To do her justice, Dinah was choke full of knowledge, and read everything, even medical books, statistics, science, and jurisprudence; for she did not know how to spend her days when she had reviewed her flower-beds and given her orders to the gardener. Gifted with an excellent memory, and the talent which some women have for hitting on the right word, she could talk on any subject with the lucidity of a studied style. And so men came from Cosne, from la Charité, and from Nevers, on the right bank; from Léré, Vailly, Argent, Blancafort, and Aubigny, on the left bank, to be introduced to Madame de La Baudraye, as they used in Switzerland, to be introduced to Madame de Staël. Those who only once heard the round of tunes emitted by this musical snuff-box went away amazed, and told such wonders of Dinah as made all the women jealous for ten leagues round.

There is an indescribable mental headiness in the admiration we inspire, or in the effect of playing a part, which fends off criticism from reaching the idol. An

atmosphere, produced perhaps by unceasing nervous tension, forms a sort of halo, through which the world below is seen. How otherwise can we account for the perennial good faith which leads to so many repeated presentments of the same effects, and the constant ignoring of warnings given by children, such a terror to their parents, or by husbands, so familiar as they are with the peacock airs of their wives? Monsieur de La Baudraye had the frankness of a man who opens an umbrella at the first drop of rain. When his wife was started on the subject of negro emancipation or the improvement of convict prisons, he would take up his little blue cap and vanish without a sound, in the certainty of being able to get to Saint-Thibault to see off a cargo of puncheons, and return an hour later to find the discussion approaching a close. Or, if he had no business to attend to, he would go for a walk on the Mall, whence he commanded the lovely panorama of the Loire Valley, and take a draught of fresh air while his wife was performing a sonata in words, or a dialectical duet.

Once fairly established as a Superior Woman, Dinah was eager to prove her devotion to the most remarkable creations of art. She threw herself into the propaganda of the romantic school, including, under Art, poetry and painting, literature and sculpture, furniture and the opera. Thus she became a mediævalist. She was also interested in any treasures that dated from the Renaissance, and employed her allies as so many devoted commission agents. Soon after she was married, she had become possessed of the Rougets' furniture, sold at Issoudun early in 1824. She purchased some very good things in the Nivernais and the Haute-Loire. At the New Year and on her birthday her friends never failed to give her some curiosities. These fancies found favour in the eyes of Monsieur de La Baudraye; they gave him an appearance of sacrificing a few crowns to his wife's taste. In point of fact, his land mania

allowed him to think of nothing but the estate of Anzy.

These 'antiquities' at that time cost much less than modern furniture. By the end of five or six years the anteroom, the dining-room, the two drawing-rooms, and the boudoir which Dinah had arranged on the ground floor of La Baudraye, every spot even to the staircase, were crammed with masterpieces collected in the four adjacent departments. These surroundings, which were called *queer* by the neighbours, were quite in harmony with Dinah. All these marvels, so soon to be the rage, struck the imagination of the strangers introduced to her; they came expecting something unusual; and they found their expectations surpassed when, behind a bower of flowers, they saw these catacombs full of old things, piled up as Sommerard used to pile them—that 'Old Mortality' of furniture. And then these finds served as so many springs which, turned on by a question, played off an essay on Jean Goujon, Michel Columb, Germain Pilon, Boulle, Van Huysum, and Boucher, the great native painter of Le Berry; on Clodion, the carver of wood, on Venetian mirrors, on Brustolone, an Italian tenor who was the Michael-Angelo of boxwood and holm oak; on the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, on the glazes of Bernard de Palissy, the enamels of Petitot, the engravings of Albrecht Dürer—whom she called Dür; on illuminations on vellum, on Gothic architecture, early decorated, flamboyant and pure—enough to turn an old man's brain and fire a young man with enthusiasm.

Madame de La Baudraye, possessed with the idea of waking up Sancerre, tried to form a so-called literary circle. The Presiding Judge, Monsieur Boirouge, who happened to have a house and garden on his hands, part of the Popinot-Chandier property, favoured the notion of this *coterie*. The wily Judge talked over the rules of

the society with Madame de La Baudraye; he proposed to figure as one of the founders, and to let the house for fifteen years to the literary club. By the time it had existed a year the members were playing dominoes, billiards, and bouillotte, and drinking mulled wine, punch, and liqueurs. A few elegant little suppers were then given, and some masked balls during the Carnival. As to literature—there were the newspapers. Polities and business were discussed. Monsieur de La Baudraye was constantly there—on his wife's account, as he said jestingly.

This result deeply grieved the Superior Woman, who despaired of Sancerre, and collected the wit of the neighbourhood in her own drawing-room. Nevertheless, and in spite of the efforts of Messieurs de Chargebœuf, Gravier, and de Clagny, of the Abbé Duret and the two chief magistrates, of a young doctor and a young Assistant Judge—all blind admirers of Dinah's—there were occasions when, weary of discussion, they allowed themselves an excursion into the domain of agreeable frivolity which constitutes the common basis of worldly conversation. Monsieur Gravier called this 'from grave to gay.' The Abbé Duret's rubber made another pleasing variety on the monologues of the oracle. The three rivals, tired of keeping their minds up to the level of the 'high range of discussion'—as they called their conversation—but not daring to confess it, would sometimes turn with ingratiating hints to the old priest.'

'Monsieur le Curé is dying for his game,' they would say.

The wily priest lent himself very readily to the little trick. He protested.

'We should lose too much by ceasing to listen to our inspired hostess!' and so he would incite Dinah's magnanimity to take pity at last on her dear Abbé.

This bold manœuvre, a device of the Sous-préfet's, was repeated with so much skill that Dinah never

suspected her slaves of escaping to the prison yard, so to speak, of the card-table; and they would leave her one of the younger functionaries to harry.

One young landowner, and the dandy of Sancerre, fell away from Dinah's good graces in consequence of some rash demonstrations. After soliciting the honour of admission to this little circle, where he flattered himself he could snatch the blossom from the constituted authorities who guarded it, he was so unfortunate as to yawn in the middle of an explanation Dinah was favouring him with—for the fourth time, it is true—of the philosophy of Kant. Monsieur de la Thaumassière, the grandson of the historian of Le Berry, was thenceforth regarded as a man entirely bereft of soul and brains.

The three devotees *en titre* each submitted to these exorbitant demands on their mind and attention, in hope of a crowning triumph, when at last Dinah should become human; for neither of them was so bold as to imagine that Dinah would give up her innocence as a wife till she should have lost all her illusions. In 1826, when she was surrounded by adorers, Dinah completed her twentieth year, and the Abbé Duret kept her in a sort of perfervid Catholicism; so her worshippers had to be content to overwhelm her with little attentions and small services, only too happy to be taken for the carpet-knights of this sovereign lady, by strangers admitted to spend an evening or two at La Baudraye.

'Madame de La Baudraye is a fruit that must be left to ripen.' This was the opinion of Monsieur Gravier, who was waiting.

As to the lawyer, he wrote letters four pages long, to which Dinah replied in soothing speech as she walked, leaning on his arm, round and round the lawn after dinner.

Madame de La Baudraye, thus guarded by three passions, and always under the eye of her pious mother,

escaped the malignity of slander. It was so evident to all Sancerre that no two of these three men would ever leave the third alone with Madame de La Baudraye, that their jealousy was a comedy to the lookers-on.

To reach Saint-Thibault from Cæsar's gate there is a way much shorter than that by the ramparts, down what is known in mountainous districts as a *coursière*, called at Sancerre *le Casse-cou*, or Break-neck Alley. The name is significant as applied to a path down the steepest part of the hillside, thickly strewn with stones, and shut in by the high banks of the vineyards on each side. By way of the Break-neck the distance from Sancerre to La Baudraye is much abridged. The ladies of the place, jealous of the Sappho of Saint-Satur, were wont to walk on the Mall, looking down this Longchamp of the bigwigs, whom they would stop and engage in conversation—sometimes the Sous-préfet and sometimes the Public Prosecutor—and who would listen with every sign of impatience or uncivil absence of mind. As the turrets of La Baudraye are visible from the Mall, many a younger man came to contemplate the abode of Dinah while envying the ten or twelve privileged persons who might spend their afternoons with the Queen of the neighbourhood.

Monsieur de La Baudraye was not slow to discover the advantage he, as Dinah's husband, held over his wife's adorers, and he made use of them without any disguise, obtaining a remission of taxes, and gaining two lawsuits. In every litigation he used the Public Prosecutor's name with such good effect that the matter was carried no further, and, like all undersized men, he was contentious and litigious in business, though in the gentlest manner.

At the same time, the more certainly guiltless she was, the less conceivable did Madame de La Baudraye's position seem to the prying eyes of these women. Frequently, at the house of the Présidente de Boirouge, the ladies of a certain age would spend a whole evening discussing the La Baudraye household, among them-

selves of course. They all had suspicions of a mystery, a secret such as always interests women who have had some experience of life. And, in fact, at La Baudraye one of those slow and monotonous conjugal tragedies was being played out which would have remained for ever unknown if the merciless scalpel of the nineteenth century, guided by the insistent demand for novelty, had not dissected the darkest corners of the heart, or at any rate those which the decency of past centuries left unopened. And that domestic drama sufficiently accounts for Dinah's immaculate virtue during her early married life.

A young lady, whose triumphs at school had been the outcome of her pride, and whose first scheme in life had been rewarded by a victory, was not likely to pause in such a brilliant career. Frail as Monsieur de La Baudraye might seem, he was really an unhoped-for good match for Mademoiselle Dinah Piédefer. But what was the hidden motive of this country landowner when, at forty-four, he married a girl of seventeen; and what could his wife make out of the bargain? This was the text of Dinah's first meditations.

The little man never behaved quite as his wife expected. To begin with, he allowed her to take the five precious acres now wasted in pleasure grounds round La Baudraye, and paid, almost with generosity, the seven or eight thousand francs required by Dinah for improvements in the house, enabling her to buy the furniture at the Rougets' sale at Issoudun, and to redecorate her rooms in various styles — Mediæval, Louis XIV., and Pompadour. The young wife found it difficult to believe that Monsieur de La Baudraye was so miserly as he was reputed, or else she must have great influence with him. This illusion lasted a year and a half.

After Monsieur de La Baudraye's second journey to

Paris, Dinah discovered in him the Arctic coldness of a provincial miser whenever money was in question. The first time she asked for supplies she played the sweetest of the comedies of which Eve invented the secret; but the little man put it plainly to his wife that he gave her two hundred francs a month for her personal expenses, and paid Madame Piédefer twelve hundred francs a year as a charge on the lands of La Hautoy, and that this was two hundred francs a year more than was agreed to under the marriage settlement.

'I say nothing of the cost of housekeeping,' he said in conclusion. 'You may give your friends cake and tea in the evening, for you must have some amusement. But I, who spent but fifteen hundred francs a year as a bachelor, now spend six thousand, including rates and repairs, and this is rather too much in relation to the nature of our property. A wine-grower is never sure of what his expenses may be—the making, the duty, the casks—while the returns depend on a scorching day or a sudden frost. Small owners, like us, whose income is far from being fixed, must base their estimates on their minimum, for they have no means of making up a deficit or a loss. What would become of us if a wine merchant became bankrupt? In my opinion, promissory notes are so many cabbage-leaves. To live as we are living, we ought always to have a year's income in hand and count on no more than two-thirds of our returns.'

Any form of resistance is enough to make a woman vow to subdue it; Dinah flung herself against a will of iron padded round with gentleness. She tried to fill the little man's soul with jealousy and alarms, but it was stockaded with insolent confidence. He left Dinah, when he went to Paris, with all the conviction of Médor in Angélique's fidelity. When she affected cold disdain, to nettle this changeling by the scorn a courtesan sometimes shows to her 'protector,' and which acts on him with the certainty of the screw of a

winepress, Monsieur de La Baudraye gazed at his wife with fixed eyes, like those of a cat which, in the midst of domestic broils, waits till a blow is threatened before stirring from its place. The strange, speechless uneasiness that was perceptible under his mute indifference almost terrified the young wife of twenty; she could not at first understand the selfish quiescence of this man, who might be compared to a cracked pot, and who, in order to live, regulated his existence with the unchangeable regularity which a clockmaker requires of a clock. So the little man always evaded his wife, while she always hit out, as it were, ten feet above his head.

Dinah's fits of fury when she saw herself condemned never to escape from La Baudraye and Sancerre are more easily imagined than described—she who had dreamed of handling a fortune and managing the dwarf whom she, the giant, had at first humoured in order to command. In the hope of some day making her appearance on the greater stage of Paris, she accepted the vulgar incense of her attendant knights with a view to seeing Monsieur de La Baudraye's name drawn from the electoral urn; for she supposed him to be ambitious, after seeing him return thrice from Paris, each time a step higher on the social ladder. But when she struck on the man's heart, it was as though she had tapped on marble! The man who had been Receiver-General and Referendary, who was now Master of Appeals, Officer of the Legion of Honour, and Royal Commissioner, was but a mole throwing up its little hills round and round a vineyard! Then some lamentations were poured into the heart of the Public Prosecutor, of the Sous-préfet, even of Monsieur Gravier, and they all increased in their devotion to this sublime victim; for, like all women, she never mentioned her speculative schemes, and—again like all women—finding such speculation vain, she ceased to speculate.

Dinah, tossed by mental storms, was still undecided

when, in the autumn of 1827, the news was told of the purchase by the Baron de La Baudraye of the estate of Anzy. Then the little old man showed an impulsion of pride and glee which for a few months changed the current of his wife's ideas; she fancied there was a hidden vein of greatness in the man when she found him applying for a patent of entail. In his triumph the Baron exclaimed—

'Dinah, you shall be a countess yet!'

There was then a patched-up re-union between the husband and wife, such as can never endure, and which only humiliated and fatigued a woman whose apparent superiority was unreal, while her unseen superiority was genuine. This whimsical medley is commoner than people think. Dinah, who was ridiculous from the perversity of her cleverness, had really great qualities of soul, but circumstances did not bring these rarer powers to light, while a provincial life debased the small change of her wit from day to day. Monsieur de La Baudraye, on the contrary, devoid of soul, of strength, and of wit, was fated to figure as a man of character, simply by pursuing a plan of conduct which he was too feeble to change.

There was in their lives a first phase, lasting six years, during which Dinah, alas! became utterly provincial. In Paris there are several kinds of women: the duchess and the financier's wife, the ambassadress and the consul's wife, the wife of the minister who is a minister, and of him who is no longer a minister; then there is the lady—quite the lady—of the right bank of the Seine and of the left. But in the country there is but one kind of woman, and she, poor thing, is the provincial woman.

This remark points to one of the sores of modern society. It must be clearly understood: France in the nineteenth century is divided into two broad zones—Paris, and the provinces. The provinces jealous of Paris; Paris never thinking of the provinces but to demand money. Of old, Paris was the Capital of the

provinces, and the Court ruled the Capital; now, all Paris is the Court, and all the country is the town.

However lofty, beautiful, and clever a girl born in any department of France may be on entering life, if, like Dinah Piédefer, she marries in the country and remains there, she inevitably becomes the provincial woman. In spite of every determination, the commonplace of second-rate ideas, indifference to dress, the culture of vulgar people, swamp the sublimer essence hidden in the youthful plant; all is over, it falls into decay. How should it be otherwise? From their earliest years girls bred in the country see none but provincials; they cannot imagine anything superior, their choice lies among mediocrities; provincial fathers marry their daughters to provincial sons; crossing the races is never thought of, and the brain inevitably degenerates, so that in many country towns intellect is as rare as the breed is hideous. Mankind becomes dwarfed in mind and body, for the fatal principle of conformity of fortune governs every matrimonial alliance. Men of talent, artists, superior brains—every bird of brilliant plumage flies to Paris. The provincial woman, inferior in herself, is also inferior through her husband. How is she to live happy under this crushing twofold consciousness?

But there is a third and terrible element besides her congenital and conjugal inferiority which contributes to make the figure arid and gloomy; to reduce it, narrow it, distort it fatally. Is not one of the most flattering unctions a woman can lay to her soul the assurance of being something in the existence of a superior man, chosen by herself, wittingly, as if to have some revenge on marriage, wherein her tastes were so little consulted? But if in the country the husbands are inferior beings, the bachelors are no less so. When a provincial wife commits her 'little sin,' she falls in love with some so-called handsome native, some indigenous dandy, a youth who wears gloves and is supposed to ride well;

but she knows at the bottom of her soul that her fancy is in pursuit of the commonplace, more or less well dressed. Dinah was preserved from this danger by the idea impressed upon her of her own superiority. Even if she had not been as carefully guarded during her early married life as she was by her mother, whose presence never weighed upon her till the day when she wanted to be rid of it, her pride, and her high sense of her own destinies, would have protected her. Flattered as she was to find herself surrounded by admirers, she saw no lover among them. No man here realised the poetical ideal which she and Anna Grossetête had been wont to sketch. When, stirred by the involuntary temptations suggested by the homage she received, she asked herself, 'If I had to make a choice, who should it be?' she owned to a preference for Monsieur de Chargebœuf, a gentleman of good family, whose appearance and manners she liked, but whose cold nature, selfishness, and narrow ambition, never rising above a prefecture and a good marriage, repelled her. At a word from his family, who were alarmed lest he should be killed for an intrigue, the Vicomte had already deserted a woman he had loved in the town where he previously had been Sous-préfet.

Monsieur de Clagny, on the other hand, the only man whose mind appealed to hers, whose ambition was founded on love, and who knew what love means, Dinah thought perfectly odious. When Dinah saw herself condemned to six years' residence at Sancerre she was on the point of accepting the devotion of Monsieur le Vicomte de Chargebœuf; but he was appointed to a prefecture and left the district. To Monsieur de Clagny's great satisfaction, the new Sous-préfet was a married man whose wife made friends with Dinah. The lawyer had now no rival to fear but Monsieur Gravier. Now Monsieur Gravier was the typical man of forty of whom women make use while they laugh at him, whose hopes

they intentionally and remorselessly encourage, as we are kind to a beast of burden. In six years, among all the men who were introduced to her from twenty leagues round, there was not one in whose presence Dinah was conscious of the excitement caused by personal beauty, by a belief in promised happiness, by the impact of a superior soul, or the anticipation of a love affair, even an unhappy one.

Thus none of Dinah's choicest faculties had a chance of developing; she swallowed many insults to her pride, which was constantly suffering under the husband who so calmly walked the stage as supernumerary in the drama of her life. Compelled to bury her wealth of love, she showed only the surface to the world. Now and then she would try to rouse herself, try to form some manly resolution; but she was kept in leading strings by the need for money. And so, slowly and in spite of the ambitious protests and grievous recriminations of her own mind, she underwent the provincial metamorphosis here described. Each day took with it a fragment of her spirited determination. She had laid down a rule for the care of her person, which she gradually departed from. Though at first she kept up with the fashions and the little novelties of elegant life, she was obliged to limit her purchases by the amount of her allowance. Instead of six hats, caps, or gowns, she resigned herself to one gown each season. She was so much admired in a certain bonnet that she made it do duty for two seasons. So it was in everything.

Not unfrequently her artistic sense led her to sacrifice the requirements of her person to secure some bit of Gothic furniture. By the seventh year she had come so low as to think it convenient to have her morning dresses made at home by the best needlewoman in the neighbourhood; and her mother, her husband, and her friends pronounced her charming in these inexpensive costumes which did credit to her taste. Her ideas were

imitated! As she had no standard of comparison, Dinah fell into the snares that surround the provincial woman. If a Parisian woman's hips are too narrow or too full, her inventive wit and the desire to please help to find some heroic remedy; if she has some defect, some ugly spot, or small disfigurement, she is capable of making it an adornment; this is often seen; but the provincial woman—never! If her waist is too short, and her figure ill balanced, well, she makes up her mind to the worst, and her adorers—or they do not adore her—must take her as she is, while the Parisian always insists on being taken for what she is not. Hence the preposterous bustles, the audacious flatness, the ridiculous fulness, the hideous outlines ingeniously displayed, to which a whole town will become accustomed, but which are so astounding when a provincial woman makes her appearance in Paris or among Parisians. Dinah, who was extremely slim, showed it off to excess, and never knew the moment when it became ridiculous; when, reduced by the dull weariness of her life, she looked like a skeleton in clothes; and her friends, seeing her every day, did not observe the gradual change in her appearance.

This is one of the natural results of a provincial life. In spite of marriage, a young woman preserves her beauty for some time, and the town is proud of her; but everybody sees her every day, and when people meet every day their perception is dulled. If, like Madame de La Baudraye, she loses her colour, it is scarcely noticed; or, again, if she flushes a little, that is intelligible and interesting. A little neglect is thought charming, and her face is so carefully studied, so well known, that slight changes are scarcely noticed, and regarded at last as 'beauty spots.' When Dinah ceased to have a new dress with a new season, she seemed to have made a concession to the philosophy of the place.

It is the same with matters of speech, choice of words and ideas, as it is with matters of feeling. The mind

can rust as well as the body if it is not rubbed up in Paris; but the thing on which provincialism most sets its stamp is gesture, gait, and movement; these soon lose the briskness which Paris constantly keeps alive. The provincial is used to walk and move in a world devoid of accident or change; there is nothing to be avoided; so in Paris she walks on as raw recruits do, never remembering that there may be hindrances, for there are none in her way in her native place, where she is known, where she is always in her place, and every one makes way for her. Thus she loses all the charm of the unforeseen.

And have you ever noticed the effect on human beings of a life in common? By the ineffaceable instinct of simian mimicry they all tend to copy each other. Each one, without knowing it, acquires the gestures, the tone of voice, the manner, the attitudes, the very countenance of others. In six years Dinah had sunk to the pitch of the society she lived in. As she acquired Monsieur de Clagny's ideas she assumed his tone of voice; she unconsciously fell into masculine manners from seeing none but men; she fancied that by laughing at what was ridiculous in them she was safe from catching it; but, as often happens, some hue of what she laughed at remained in grain.

A Parisian woman sees so many examples of good taste that a contrary result ensues. In Paris women learn to seize the hour and moment when they may appear to advantage; while Madame de La Baudraye, accustomed to take the stage, acquired an indefinable theatrical and domineering manner, the air of a *prima donna* coming forward on the boards, of which ironical smiles would soon have cured her in the capital.

But after she had acquired this stock of absurdities, and, deceived by her worshippers, imagined them to be added graces, a moment of terrible awakening came upon her like the fall of an avalanche from a moun-

tain. In one day she was crushed by a frightful comparison.

In 1822, after the departure of Monsieur de Chargebœuf, she was excited by the anticipation of a little pleasure ; she was expecting the Baronne de Fontaine. Anna's husband, who was now Director-General under the Minister of Finance, took advantage of leave of absence on the occasion of his father's death to take his wife to Italy. Anna wished to spend a day at Sancerre with her school-friend. This meeting was strangely disastrous. Anna, who at school had been far less handsome than Dinah, now, as Baronne de Fontaine, was a thousand times handsomer than the Baronne de La Baudraye, in spite of her fatigue and her travelling dress. Anna stepped out of an elegant travelling chaise loaded with Paris milliners' boxes, and she had with her a lady's maid, whose airs quite frightened Dinah. All the difference between a woman of Paris and a provincial was at once evident to Dinah's intelligent eye ; she saw herself as her friend saw her—and Anna found her altered beyond recognition. Anna spent six thousand francs a year on herself alone, as much as kept the whole household at La Baudraye.

In twenty-four hours the friends had exchanged many confidences ; and the Parisian, seeing herself so far superior to the phœnix of Mademoiselle Chamarolles' school, showed her provincial friend such kindness, such attentions, while giving her certain explanations, as were so many stabs to Dinah, though she perfectly understood that Anna's advantages all lay on the surface, while her own were for ever buried.

When Anna had left, Madame de La Baudraye, by this time two-and-twenty, fell into the depths of despair.

'What is it that ails you ?' asked Monsieur de Clagny, seeing her so dejected.

'Anna,' said she, 'has learned to live, while I have been learning to endure.'

A tragi-comedy was, in fact, being enacted in Madame de La Baudraye's house, in harmony with her struggles over money matters and her successive transformations —a drama to which no one but Monsieur de Clagny and the Abbé Duret ever knew the clue, when Dinah in sheer idleness, or perhaps sheer vanity, revealed the secret of her anonymous fame.

Though a mixture of verse and prose is a monstrous anomaly in French literature, there must be exceptions to the rule. This tale will be one of the two instances in these Studies of violation of the laws of narrative; for to give a just idea of the unconfessed struggle which may excuse, though it cannot absolve Dinah, it is necessary to give an analysis of a poem which was the outcome of her deep despair.

Her patience and her resignation alike broken by the departure of the Vicomte de Chargebœuf, Dinah took the worthy Abbé's advice to exhale her evil thoughts in verse—a proceeding which perhaps accounts for some poets.

'You will find such relief as those who write epitaphs or elegies over those whom they have lost. Pain is soothed in the heart as lines surge up in the brain.'

This strange production caused a great ferment in the departments of the Allier, the Nièvre, and the Cher, proud to possess a poet capable of rivalry with the glories of Paris. *Paquita la Sevillane*, by *Jan Diaz*, was published in the *Echo du Morvan*, a review which for eighteen months maintained its existence in spite of provincial indifference. Some knowing persons at Nevers declared that Jan Diaz was making fun of the new school, just then bringing out its eccentric verse, full of vitality and imagery, and of brilliant effects produced by defying the Muse under pretext of adapting German, English, and Romanesque mannerisms.

The poem began with this ballad :—

Ah ! if you knew the fragrant plain,
The air, the sky, of golden Spain,
Its fervid noons, its balmy spring,
Sad daughters of the northern gloom,
Of love, of heav'n, of native home,
You never would presume to sing !

For men are there of other mould
Than those who live in this dull cold.
And there to music low and sweet
Sevillian maids, from eve till dawn,
Dance lightly on the moonlit lawn
In satin shoes, on dainty feet.

Ah, you would be the first to blush
Over your dancers' romp and rush,
And your too hideous carnival,
That turns your cheeks all chill and blue,
And skips the mud in hob-nail'd shoe—
A truly dismal festival.

To pale-faced girls, and in a squalid room,
Paquita sang ; the murky town beneath
Was Rouen, whence the slender spires rise
To chew the storm with teeth.
Rouen so hideous, noisy, full of rage—

And here followed a magnificent description of Rouen —where Dinah had never been—written with the affected brutality which, a little later, inspired so many imitations of Juvenal ; a contrast drawn between the life of a manufacturing town and the careless life of Spain, between the love of Heaven and of human beauty, and the worship of machinery, in short, between poetry and sordid money-making.

Then Jan Diaz accounted for Paquita's horror of Normandy by saying—

Seville, you see, had been her native home,
Seville, where skies are blue and evening sweet.
She, at thirteen, the sovereign of the town,
Had lovers at her feet.

For her three Toreadors had gone to death
Or victory ; the prize to be a kiss—
One kiss from those red lips of sweetest breath—
A longed-for touch of bliss !

The features of the Spanish girl's portrait have served so often as those of the courtesan in so many self-styled *poems*, that it would be tiresome to quote here the hundred lines of description. To judge of the lengths to which audacity had carried Dinah, it will be enough to give the conclusion. According to Madame de La Baudraye's ardent pen, Paquita was so entirely created for love that she can hardly have met with a knight worthy of her ; for

. . . . In her passionate fire
Every man would have swooned from the heat,
When she at love's feast, in her fervid desire,
As yet had but taken her seat.

'And yet she could quit the joys of Seville, its woods and fields of orange-trees, for a Norman soldier who won her love and carried her away to his hearth and home. She did not weep for her Andalusia, the Soldier was her whole joy. . . . But the day came when he was compelled to start for Russia in the footsteps of the great Emperor.'

Nothing could be more dainty than the description of the parting between the Spanish girl and the Normandy Captain of Artillery, who, in the delirium of passion expressed with feeling worthy of Byron, exacted from Paquita a vow of absolute fidelity, in the Cathedral at Rouen in front of the altar of the Blessed Virgin, who

Though a Maid is a woman, and never forgives
When lovers are false to their vows.

A large part of the poem was devoted to describing Paquita's sufferings when alone in Rouen waiting till the campaign was over ; she stood writhing at the

window bars as she watched happy couples go by; she suppressed her passion in her heart with a determination that consumed her; she lived on narcotics, and exhausted herself in dreams.

Almost she died, but still her heart was true;
And when at last her soldier came again,
He found her beauty ever fresh and new—
He had not loved in valn!

'But he, pale and frozen by the cold of Russia, chilled to the very marrow, met his yearning fair one with a melancholy smile.'

The whole poem was written up to this situation, which was worked out with such vigour and boldness as too entirely justified the Abbé Duret.

Paquita, on reaching the limits set to real love, did not, like Julie and Héloïse, throw herself into the ideal; no, she rushed into the paths of vice, which is, no doubt, shockingly natural; but she did it without any touch of magnificence, for lack of means, as it would be difficult to find in Rouen men impassioned enough to place Paquita in a suitable setting of luxury and splendour. This horrible realism, emphasised by gloomy poetic feeling, had inspired some passages such as modern poetry is too free with, rather too like the flayed anatomical figures known to artists as *écorchés*. Then, by a highly philosophical revulsion, after describing the house of ill-fame where the Andalusian ended her days, the writer came back to the ballad at the opening:—

Paquita now is faded, shrunk, and old,
But she it was who sang:

'If you but knew the fragrant plain,
The air, the sky, of golden Spain,' etc.

The gloomy vigour of this poem, running to about

six hundred lines, and serving as a powerful foil, to use a painter's word, to the two *séguidillas* at the beginning and end, the masculine utterance of inexpressible grief alarmed the woman who found herself admired by three departments, under the black cloak of the anonymous. While she fully enjoyed the intoxicating delights of success, Dinah dreaded the malignity of provincial society, where more than one woman, if the secret should slip out, would certainly find points of resemblance between the writer and Paquita. Reflection came too late; Dinah shuddered with shame at having made 'copy' of some of her woes.

'Write no more,' said the Abbé Duret. 'You will cease to be a woman; you will be a poet.'

Moulins, Nevers, Bourges were searched to find Jan Diaz; but Dinah was impenetrable. To remove any evil impression, in case any unforeseen chance should betray her name, she wrote a charming poem in two cantos on *The Mass-Oak*, a legend of the Nivernais:—

'Once on a time the folks of Nevers and the folks of Saint-Saulge, at war with each other, came at daybreak to fight a battle, in which one or other should perish, and met in the forest of Faye. And then there stood between them, under an oak, a priest whose aspect in the morning sun was so commanding that the foes at his bidding heard Mass as he performed it under the oak, and at the words of the Gospel they made friends.'— The oak is still shown in the forest of Faye.

This poem, immeasurably superior to *Paquita la Sevillane*, was far less admired.

After these two attempts Madame de La Baudraye, feeling herself a poet, had a light on her brow and a flash in her eyes that made her handsomer than ever. She cast longing looks at Paris, aspiring to fame—and fell back into her den of La Baudraye, her daily squabbles with her husband, and her little circle, where everybody's character, intentions, and remarks were too well known not to have

become a bore. Though she found relief from her dreary life in literary work, and poetry echoed loudly in her empty life, though she thus found an outlet for her energies, literature increased her hatred of the grey and ponderous provincial atmosphere.

When, after the Revolution of 1830, the glory of George Sand was reflected on Le Berry, many a town envied La Châtre the privilege of having given birth to this rival of Madame de Staël and Camille Maupin, and were ready to do homage to minor feminine talent. Thus there arose in France a vast number of tenth Muses, young girls or young wives tempted from a silent life by the bait of glory. Very strange doctrines were proclaimed as to the part women should play in society. Though the sound common sense which lies at the root of the French nature was not perverted, women were suffered to express ideas and profess opinions which they would not have owned to a few years previously.

Monsieur de Clagny took advantage of this outbreak of freedom to collect the works of Jan Diaz in a small volume printed by Desroziers at Moulins. He wrote a little notice of the author, too early snatched from the world of letters, which was amusing to those who were in the secret, but which even then had not the merit of novelty. Such practical jokes, capital so long as the author remains unknown, fall rather flat if subsequently the poet stands confessed.

From this point of view, however, the memoir of Jan Diaz, born at Bourges in 1807, the son of a Spanish prisoner, may very likely some day deceive the compiler of some *Universal Biography.* Nothing is overlooked; neither the names of the professors at the Bourges college, nor those of his deceased schoolfellows, such as Lousteau, Bianchon, and other famous natives of the province, who, it is said, knew the dreamy, melancholy

boy and his precocious bent towards poetry. An elegy called *Tristesse* (Melancholy), written at school; the two poems *Paquita la Sevillane* and *Le Chêne de la Messe*; three sonnets, a description of the Cathedral and the House of Jacques Cœur at Bourges, with a tale called *Carola*, published as the work he was engaged on at the time of his death, constituted the whole of these literary remains; and the poet's last hours, full of misery and despair, could not fail to wring the hearts of the feeling public of the Nièvre, the Bourbonnais, the Cher, and the Morvan, where he died near Château-Chinon, unknown to all, even to the woman he had loved!

Of this little yellow paper volume two hundred copies were printed; one hundred and fifty were sold—about fifty in each department. This average of tender and poetic souls in three departments of France is enough to revive the enthusiasm of writers as to the *Furia Francese*, which nowadays is more apt to expend itself in business than in books.

When Monsieur de Clagny had given away a certain number of copies, Dinah still had seven or eight, wrapped up in the newspapers which had published notices of the work. Twenty copies forwarded to the Paris papers were swamped in the editors' offices. Nathan was taken in as well as several of his fellow-countrymen of Le Berry, and wrote an article on the great man, in which he credited him with all the fine qualities we discover in those who are dead and buried.

Lousteau, warned by his former school-fellows, who could not remember Jan Diaz, waited for information from Sancerre, and learned that Jan Diaz was a pseudonym assumed by a woman.

Then, in and around Sancerre, Madame de La Baudraye became the rage; she was the future rival of George Sand. From Sancerre to Bourges a poem was praised which, at any other time, would certainly have been hooted. The provincial public—like every French

public, perhaps—does not share the love of the King of the French for the happy medium: it lifts you to the skies or drags you in the mud.

By this time the good Abbé, Madame de La Baudraye's counsellor, was dead; he would certainly have prevented her rushing into public life. But three years of work without recognition weighed on Dinah's soul, and she accepted the clatter of fame as a substitute for her disappointed ambitions. Poetry and dreams of celebrity, which had lulled her grief since her meeting with Anna Grossetête, no longer sufficed to exhaust the activity of her morbid heart. The Abbé Duret, who had talked of the world when the voice of religion was impotent, who understood Dinah, and promised her a happy future by assuring her that God would compensate her for sufferings bravely endured,—this good old man could no longer stand between the opening to sin and the handsome young woman he had called his daughter.

The wise old priest had more than once endeavoured to enlighten Dinah as to her husband's character, telling her that the man could hate; but women are not ready to believe in such force in weak natures, and hatred is too constantly in action not to be a vital force. Dinah, finding her husband incapable of love, denied him the power to hate.

'Do not confound hatred and vengeance,' said the Abbé. 'They are two quite different sentiments. One is the instinct of small minds; the other is the outcome of law which great souls obey. God is avenged, but He does not hate. Hatred is a vice of narrow souls; they feed it with all their meanness, and make it a pretext for sordid tyranny. So beware of offending Monsieur de La Baudraye; he would forgive an infidelity, because he could make capital of it, but he would be doubly implacable if you should touch him on the spot so cruelly wounded by Monsieur

Milaud of Nevers, and would make your life unendurable.'

Now, at the time when the whole countryside—Nevers and Sancerre, Le Morvan and Le Berry—was priding itself on Madame de La Baudraye, and lauding her under the name of Jan Diaz, 'little La Baudraye' felt her glory a mortal blow. He alone knew the secret source of *Paquita la Sevillane*. When this terrible work was spoken of, everybody said of Dinah—'Poor woman! Poor soul!'

The women rejoiced in being able to pity her who had so long oppressed them; never had Dinah seemed to stand higher in the eyes of the neighbourhood.

The shrivelled old man, more wrinkled, yellower, feebler than ever, gave no sign; but Dinah sometimes detected in his eyes, as he looked at her, a sort of icy venom which gave the lie to his increased politeness and gentleness. She understood at last that this was not, as she had supposed, a mere domestic squabble; but when she forced an explanation with her 'insect,' as Monsieur Gravier called him, she found the cold, hard impassibility of steel. She flew into a passion; she reproached him for her life these eleven years past; she made—intentionally—what women call a scene. But 'little La Baudraye' sat in an armchair with his eyes shut, and listened phlegmatically to the storm. And, as usual, the dwarf got the better of his wife. Dinah saw that she had done wrong in writing; she vowed never to write another line, and she kept her vow.

Then was there desolation in the Sancerrois.

'Why did not Madame de La Baudraye compose any more verses?' was the universal cry.

At this time Madame de La Baudraye had no enemies; every one rushed to see her, not a week passed without fresh introductions. The wife of the presiding judge, an august *bourgeoise*, *née* Popinot-Chandier, desired her son, a youth of two-and-twenty, to pay his humble

respects at La Baudraye, and flattered herself that she might see her Gatien in the good graces of this Superior Woman.—The words Superior Woman had superseded the absurd nickname of *The Sappho of Saint-Satur.*—This lady, who for nine years had led the opposition, was so delighted at the good reception accorded to her son, that she became loud in her praises of the Muse of Sancerre.

'After all,' she exclaimed, in reply to a tirade from Madame de Clagny, who hated her husband's supposed mistress, 'she is the handsomest and cleverest woman in the whole province!'

After scrambling through so many brambles and setting off on so many different roads, after dreaming of love in splendour and scenting the darkest dramas, thinking such terrible joys would be cheaply purchased so weary was she of her dreary existence, one day Dinah fell into the pit she had sworn to avoid. Seeing Monsieur de Clagny always sacrificing himself, and at last refusing a high appointment in Paris, where his family wanted to see him, she said to herself, 'He loves me!' She vanquished her repulsion, and seemed willing to reward so much constancy.

It was to this impulse of generosity on her part that a coalition was due, formed in Sancerre to secure the return of Monsieur de Clagny at the next elections. Madame de La Baudraye had dreamed of going to Paris in the wake of the new deputy.

But, in spite of the most solemn promises, the hundred and fifty votes to be recorded in favour of this adorer of the lovely Dinah—who hoped to see this defender of the widow and the orphan wearing the gown of the Keeper of the Seals—figured as an imposing minority of fifty votes. The jealousy of the Président de Boirouge, and Monsieur Gravier's hatred, for he believed in the candidate's supremacy in Dinah's heart, had been worked upon by a young Sous-préfet; and for this

worthy deed the allies got the young man made a préfet elsewhere.

'I shall never cease to regret,' said he, as he quitted Sancerre, 'that I did not succeed in pleasing Madame de La Baudraye; that would have made my triumph complete!'

The household that was thus racked by domestic troubles was calm on the surface; here were two ill-assorted but resigned beings, and the indescribable propriety, the lie that society insists on, and which to Dinah was an unendurable yoke. Why did she long to throw off the mask she had worn for twelve years? Whence this weariness which, every day, increased her hope of finding herself a widow?

The reader who has noted all the phases of her existence will have understood the various illusions by which Dinah, like many another woman, had been deceived. After an attempt to master Monsieur de La Baudraye, she had indulged the hope of becoming a mother. Between those miserable disputes over household matters and the melancholy conviction as to her fate, quite a long time had elapsed. Then, when she had looked for consolation, the consoler, Monsieur de Chargebœuf, had left her. Thus, the overwhelming temptation which commonly causes women to sin had hitherto been absent. For if there are, after all, some women who make straight for unfaithfulness, are there not many more who cling to hope, and do not fall till they have wandered long in a labyrinth of secret woes?

Such was Dinah. She had so little impulse to fail in her duty, that she did not care enough for Monsieur de Clagny to forgive him his defeat.

Then the move to the Château d'Anzy, the rearrangement of her collected treasures and curiosities, which derived added value from the splendid setting which Philibert de Lorme seemed to have planned on purpose

for this museum, occupied her for several months, giving her leisure to meditate one of those decisive steps that startle the public, ignorant of the motives which, however, it sometimes discovers by dint of gossip and suppositions.

Madame de La Baudraye had been greatly struck by the reputation of Lousteau, who was regarded as a lady's man of the first water in consequence of his intimacies among actresses; she was anxious to know him; she read his books, and was fired with enthusiasm, less perhaps for his talents than for his successes with women; and to attract him to the country, she started the notion that it was obligatory on Sancerre to return one of its great men at the elections. She made Gatien Boirouge write to the great physician Bianchon, whom he claimed as a cousin through the Popinots. Then she persuaded an old friend of the departed Madame Lousteau to stir up the journalist's ambitions by letting him know that certain persons in Sancerre were firmly bent on electing a deputy from among the distinguished men in Paris.

Tired of her commonplace neighbours, Madame de La Baudraye would thus at last meet really illustrious men, and might give her fall the lustre of fame.

Neither Lousteau nor Bianchon replied; they were waiting perhaps till the holidays. Bianchon, who had won his professor's chair the year before after a brilliant contest, could not leave his lectures.

In the month of September, when the vintage was at its height, the two Parisians arrived in their native province, and found it absorbed in the unremitting toil of the wine-crop of 1836; there could therefore be no public demonstration in their favour. 'We have fallen flat,' said Lousteau to his companion, in the slang of the stage.

In 1836, Lousteau, worn by sixteen years of struggle in the Capital, and aged quite as much by pleasure as by penury, hard work, and disappointments, looked eight-

and-forty, though he was no more than thirty-seven. He was already bald, and had assumed a Byronic air in harmony with his early decay and the lines furrowed in face by over-indulgence in champagne. He ascribed these signs-manual of dissipation to the severities of a literary life, declaring that the Press was murderous; and he gave it to be understood that it consumed superior talents, so as to lend a grace to his exhaustion. In his native town he thought proper to exaggerate his affected contempt of life and his spurious misanthropy. Still, his eyes could flash with fire like a volcano supposed to be extinct, and he endeavoured, by dressing fashionably, to make up for the lack of youth that might strike a woman's eye.

Horace Bianchon, who wore the ribbon of the Legion of Honour, was fat and burly, as beseems a fashionable physician, with a patriarchal air, his hair thick and long, a prominent brow, the frame of a hard worker, and the calm expression of a philosopher. This somewhat prosaic personality set off his more frivolous companion to advantage.

The two great men remained unrecognised during a whole morning at the inn where they had put up, and it was only by chance that Monsieur de Clagny heard of their arrival. Madame de La Baudraye, in despair at this, despatched Gatien Boirouge, who had no vineyards, to beg the two gentlemen to spend a few days at the Château d'Anzy. For the last year Dinah had played the châtelaine, and spent the winter only at La Baudraye. Monsieur Gravier, the Public Prosecutor, the Presiding Judge, and Gatien Boirouge combined to give a banquet to the two great men, to meet the literary personages of the town.

On hearing that the beautiful Madame de La Baudraye was Jan Diaz, the Parisians went to spend three days at Anzy, fetched in a sort of waggonette driven by

Gatien himself. The young man, under a genuine illusion, spoke of Madame de La Baudraye not only as the handsomest woman in those parts, a woman so superior that she might give George Sand a qualm, but as a woman who would produce a great sensation in Paris. Hence the extreme though suppressed astonishment of Doctor Bianchon and the waggish journalist when they beheld, on the garden steps of Anzy, a lady dressed in thin black cashmere with a deep tucker, in effect like a riding-habit cut short, for they quite understood the pretentiousness of such extreme simplicity. Dinah also wore a black velvet cap, like that in the portrait of Raphael, and below it her hair fell in thick curls. This attire showed off a rather pretty figure, fine eyes, and handsome eyelids somewhat faded by the weariful life that has been described. In Le Berry the singularity of this *artistic* costume was a cloak for the romantic affectations of the Superior Woman.

On seeing the affectations of their too amiable hostess —which were, indeed, affectations of soul and mind— the friends glanced at each other, and put on a deeply serious expression to listen to Madame de La Baudraye, who made them a set speech of thanks for coming to cheer the monotony of her days. Dinah walked her guests round and round the lawn, ornamented with large vases of flowers, which lay in front of the Château d'Anzy.

'How is it,' said Lousteau, the practical joker, 'that so handsome a woman as you, and apparently so superior, should have remained buried in the country? What do you do to make life endurable?'

'Ah! that is the crux,' said the lady. 'It is unendurable. Utter despair or dull resignation—there is no third alternative; that is the arid soil in which our existence is rooted, and on which a thousand stagnant ideas fall; they cannot fertilise the ground, but they supply food for the etiolated flowers of our desert souls.

Never believe in indifference! Indifference is either despair or resignation. Then each woman takes up the pursuit which, according to her character, seems to promise some amusement. Some rush into jam-making and washing, household management, the rural joys of the vintage or the harvest, bottling fruit, embroidering handkerchiefs, the cares of motherhood, the intrigues of a country town. Others torment a much-enduring piano, which, at the end of seven years, sounds like an old kettle, and ends its asthmatic life at the Château d'Anzy. Some pious dames talk over the different brands of the Word of God—the Abbé Fritaud as compared with the Abbé Guinard. They play cards in the evening, dance with the same partners for twelve years running, in the same rooms, at the same dates. This delightful life is varied by solemn walks on the Mall, visits of politeness among the women, who ask each other where they bought their gowns.

'Conversation is bounded on the south by remarks on the intrigues lying hidden under the stagnant water of provincial life, on the north by proposed marriages, on the west by jealousies, and on the east by sour remarks.

'And so,' she went on, striking an attitude, 'you see a woman wrinkled at nine-and-twenty, ten years before the time fixed by the rules of Doctor Bianchon, a woman whose skin is ruined at an early age, who turns as yellow as a quince when she is yellow at all—we have seen some turn green. When we have reached that point, we try to justify our normal condition; then we turn and rend the terrible passions of Paris with teeth as sharp as rats' teeth. We have Puritan women here, sour enough to tear the laces of Parisian finery, and eat out all the poetry of your Parisian beauties, who undermine the happiness of others while they cry up their walnuts and rancid bacon, glorify this squalid mouse-hole, and the dingy colour and conventual smell of our delightful life at Sancerre.'

'I admire such courage, Madame,' said Bianchon. 'When we have to endure such misfortunes, it is well to have the wit to make a virtue of necessity.'

Amazed at the brilliant move by which Dinah thus placed provincial life at the mercy of her guests, in anticipation of their sarcasms, Gatien Boirouge nudged Lousteau's elbow, with a glance and a smile, which said—

'Well! did I say too much?'

'But, Madame,' said Lousteau, 'you are proving that we are still in Paris. I shall steal this gem of description; it will be worth ten francs to me in an article.'

'Oh, Monsieur!' she retorted, 'never trust provincial women.'

'And why not?' said Lousteau.

Madame de La Baudraye was wily enough—an innocent form of cunning, to be sure—to show the two Parisians, one of whom she would choose to be her conqueror, the snare into which he would fall, reflecting that she would have the upper hand at the moment when he should cease to see it.

'When you first come,' said she, 'you laugh at us. Then when you have forgotten the impression of Paris brilliancy, and see us in our own sphere, you pay court to us, if only as a pastime. And you, who are famous for your past passions, will be the object of attentions which will flatter you. Then take care!' cried Dinah, with a coquettish gesture, raising herself above provincial absurdities and Lousteau's irony by her own sarcastic speech. 'When a poor little country-bred woman has an eccentric passion for some superior man, some Parisian who has wandered into the provinces, it is to her something more than a sentiment; she makes it her occupation and part of all her life. There is nothing more dangerous than the attachment of such a woman; she compares, she studies, she reflects, she dreams; and she

will not give up her dream, she thinks still of the man she loves when he has ceased to think of her.

'Now one of the catastrophes that weigh most heavily on a woman in the provinces is that abrupt termination of her passion which is so often seen in England. In the country, a life under minute observation as keen as an Indian's compels a woman either to keep on the rails or to start aside like a steam engine wrecked by an obstacle. The strategies of love, the coquetting which form half the composition of a Parisian woman, are utterly unknown here.'

'That is true,' said Lousteau. 'There is in a country-bred woman's heart a store of surprises, as in some toys.'

'Dear me!' Dinah went on, 'a woman will have spoken to you three times in the course of a winter, and without your knowing it, you will be lodged in her heart. Then comes a picnic, an excursion, what not, and all is said—or, if you prefer it, all is done! This conduct, which seems odd to unobserving persons, is really very natural. A poet, such as you are, or a philosopher, an observer, like Doctor Bianchon, instead of vilifying the provincial woman and believing her depraved, would be able to guess the wonderful unrevealed poetry, every chapter, in short, of the sweet romance of which the last phase falls to the benefit of some happy sub-lieutenant or some provincial bigwig.'

'The provincial women I have met in Paris,' said Lousteau, 'were, in fact, rapid in their proceedings——'

'My word, they are strange,' said the lady, giving a significant shrug of her shoulders.

'They are like the playgoers who book for the second performance, feeling sure that the piece will not fail,' replied the journalist.

'And what is the cause of all these woes?' asked Bianchon.

'Paris is the monster that brings us grief,' replied the Superior Woman. 'The evil is seven leagues round, and

devastates the whole land. Provincial life is not self-existent. It is only when a nation is divided into fifty minor states that each can have a physiognomy of its own, and then a woman reflects the glory of the sphere where she reigns. This social phenomenon, I am told, may be seen in Italy, Switzerland, and Germany ; but in France, as in every country where there is but one capital, a dead level of manners must necessarily result from centralisation.'

'Then you would say that manners could only recover their individuality and native distinction by the formation of a federation of French states into one empire ?' said Lousteau.

'That is hardly to be wished, for France would have to conquer too many countries,' said Bianchon.

'This misfortune is unknown to England,' exclaimed Dinah. 'London does not exert such tyranny as that by which Paris oppresses France—for which, indeed, French ingenuity will at last find a remedy ; however, it has a worse disease in its vile hypocrisy, which is a far greater evil !'

'The English aristocracy,' said Lousteau, hastening to put a word in, for he foresaw a Byronic paragraph, 'has the advantage over ours of assimilating every form of superiority ; it lives in the midst of magnificent parks ; it is in London for no more than two months. It lives in the country, flourishing there, and making it flourish.'

'Yes,' said Madame de la Baudraye, 'London is the capital of trade and speculation, and the centre of government. The aristocracy hold a "mote" there for sixty days only ; it gives and takes the passwords of the day, looks in on the legislative cookery, reviews the girls to marry, the carriages to be sold, exchanges greetings, and is away again ; and is so far from amusing, that it cannot bear itself for more than the few days known as "the season."'

'Hence,' said Lousteau, hoping to stop this nimble tongue by an epigram, 'in Perfidious Albion, as the *Constitutionnel* has it, you may happen to meet a charming woman in any part of the kingdom.'

'But charming *English* women!' replied Madame de la Baudraye with a smile. 'Here is my mother, I will introduce you,' said she, seeing Madame Piédefer coming towards them.

Having introduced the two Paris lions to the ambitious skeleton that called itself woman under the name of Madame Piédefer—a tall, lean personage with a red face, teeth that were doubtfully genuine, and hair that was undoubtedly dyed, Dinah left her visitors to themselves for a few minutes.

'Well,' said Gatien to Lousteau, 'what do you think of her?'

'I think that the clever woman of Sancerre is simply the greatest chatterbox,' replied the journalist.

'A woman who wants to see you deputy!' cried Gatien. 'An angel!'

'Forgive me, I forgot you were in love with her,' said Lousteau. 'Forgive the cynicism of an old scamp. —Ask Bianchon; I have no illusions left. I see things as they are. The woman has evidently dried up her mother like a partridge left to roast at too fierce a fire.'

Gatien de Boirouge contrived to let Madame de La Baudraye know what the journalist had said of her in the course of the dinner, which was copious, not to say splendid, and the lady took care not to talk too much while it was proceeding. This lack of conversation betrayed Gatien's indiscretion. Etienne tried to regain his footing, but all Dinah's advances were directed to Bianchon.

However, halfway through the evening, the Baroness was gracious to Lousteau again. Have you never observed what great meanness may be committed for small ends? Thus the haughty Dinah, who would not

sacrifice herself for a fool, who in the depths of the country led such a wretched life of struggles, of suppressed rebellion, of unuttered poetry, who to get away from Lousteau had climbed the highest and steepest peak of her scorn, and who would not have come down if she had seen the sham Byron at her feet, suddenly stepped off it as she recollected her album.

Madame de La Baudraye had caught the mania for autographs; she possessed an oblong volume which deserved the name of album better than most, as two-thirds of the pages were still blank. The Baronne de Fontaine, who had kept it for three months, had with great difficulty obtained a line from Rossini, six bars written by Meyerbeer, the four lines that Victor Hugo writes in every album, a verse from Lamartine, a few words from Béranger, *Calypso ne pouvait se consoler du départ d'Ulysse*' (the first words of *Télémaque*) written by George Sand, Scribe's famous lines on the Umbrella, a sentence from Charles Nodier, an outline of distance by Jules Dupré, the signature of David d'Angers, and three notes written by Hector Berlioz. Monsieur de Clagny, during a visit to Paris, added a song by Lacenaire—a much coveted autograph, two lines from Fieschi, and an extremely short note from Napoleon, which were pasted on to pages of the album. Then Monsieur Gravier, in the course of a tour, had persuaded Mademoiselle Mars to write her name on this album, with Mademoiselle Georges, Taglioni, and Grisi, and some distinguished actors, such as Frédérick Lemaître, Monrose, Bouffé, Rubini, Lablache, Nourrit, and Arnal; for he knew a set of old fellows bought up in the seraglio, as they phrased it, who did him this favour.

This beginning of a collection was all the more precious to Dinah because she was the only person for ten leagues round who owned an album. Within the last two years, however, several young ladies had acquired such books, in which they made their friends and

acquaintances write more or less absurd quotations or sentiments. You who spend your lives in collecting autographs, simple and happy souls, like Dutch tulip fanciers, you will excuse Dinah when, in her fear of not keeping her guests more than two days, she begged Bianchon to enrich the volume she handed to him with a few lines of his writing.

The doctor made Lousteau smile by showing him this sentence on the first page:—

'What makes the populace dangerous is that it has in its pocket an absolution for every crime.

'J. B. de Clagny.'

'We will second the man who is brave enough to plead in favour of the Monarchy,' Desplein's great pupil whispered to Lousteau, and he wrote below:—

'The distinction between Napoleon and a water-carrier is evident only to Society; Nature takes no account of it. Thus Democracy, which resists inequality, constantly appeals to Nature.

'H. Bianchon.'

'Ah!' cried Dinah, amazed, 'you rich men take a gold piece out of your purse as poor men bring out a farthing. . . . I do not know,' she went on, turning to Lousteau, 'whether it is taking an unfair advantage of a guest to hope for a few lines——'

'Nay, Madame, you flatter me. Bianchon is a great man, but I am too insignificant!—Twenty years hence my name will be more difficult to identify than that of the Public Prosecutor whose axiom, written in your album, will designate him as an obscurer Montesquieu. And I should want at least twenty-four hours to improvise some sufficiently bitter reflections, for I could only describe what I feel.'

'I wish you needed a fortnight,' said Madame de La Baudraye graciously, as she handed him the book. 'I should keep you here all the longer.'

At five next morning all the party in the Château d'Anzy were astir, little La Baudraye having arranged a day's sport for the Parisians—less for their pleasure than to gratify his own conceit. He was delighted to make them walk over the twelve hundred acres of waste land that he was intending to reclaim, an undertaking that would cost some hundred thousand francs, but which might yield an increase of thirty to sixty thousand francs a year in the returns of the estate of Anzy.

'Do you know why the Public Prosecutor has not come out with us?' asked Gatien Boirouge of Monsieur Gravier.

'Why, he told us that he was obliged to sit to-day; the minor cases are before the Court,' replied the other.

'And did you believe that?' cried Gatien. 'Well, my papa said to me, "Monsieur Lebas will not join you early, for Monsieur de Clagny has begged him as his deputy to sit for him!"'

'Indeed!' said Gravier, changing countenance. 'And Monsieur de La Baudraye is gone to La Charité!'

'But why do you meddle in such matters?' said Bianchon to Gatien.

'Horace is right,' said Lousteau. 'I cannot imagine why you trouble your heads so much about each other; you waste your time in frivolities.'

Horace Bianchon looked at Étienne Lousteau, as much as to say that newspaper epigrams and the satire of the 'funny column' were incomprehensible at Sancerre.

On reaching a copse, Monsieur Gravier left the two great men and Gatien, under the guidance of a keeper, to make their way through a little ravine.

'Well, we must wait for Monsieur Gravier,' said Bianchon, when they had reached a clearing.

'You may be a great physician,' said Gatien, 'but you are ignorant of provincial life. You mean to wait for Monsieur Gravier?—By this time he is running like a hare, in spite of his little round stomach; he is within twenty minutes of Anzy by now——' Gatien looked at his watch. 'Good! he will be just in time.'

'Where?'

'At the château for breakfast,' replied Gatien. 'Do you suppose I could rest easy if Madame de La Baudraye were alone with Monsieur de Clagny? There are two of them now; they will keep an eye on each other. Dinah will be well guarded.'

'Ah, ha! Then Madame de La Baudraye has not yet made up her mind?' said Lousteau.

'So mamma thinks. For my part, I am afraid that Monsieur de Clagny has at last succeeded in bewitching Madame de La Baudraye. If he has been able to show her that he had any chance of putting on the robes of the Keeper of the Seals, he may have hidden his mole-skin complexion, his terrible eyes, his touzled mane, his voice like a hoarse crier's, his bony figure, like that of a starveling poet, and have assumed all the charms of Adonis. If Dinah sees Monsieur de Clagny as Attorney-General, she may see him as a handsome youth. Eloquence has great privileges.—Besides, Madame de La Baudraye is full of ambition. She does not like Sancerre, and dreams of the glories of Paris.'

'But what interest have you in all this?' said Lousteau. 'If she is in love with the Public Prosecutor!—Ah! you think she will not love him for long, and you hope to succeed him.'

'You who live in Paris,' said Gatien, 'meet as many different women as there are days in the year. But at Sancerre, where there are not half a dozen, and where, of those six, five set up for the most extravagant virtue,

when the handsomest of them all keeps you at an infinite distance by looks as scornful as though she were of the blood royal, a young man of two-and-twenty may surely be allowed to make a guess at her secrets, since she must then treat him with some consideration.'

'Consideration! So that is what you call it in these parts?' said the journalist with a smile.

'I should suppose Madame de La Baudraye to have too much good taste to trouble her head about that ugly ape,' said Bianchon.

'Horace,' said Lousteau, 'look here, O learned interpreter of human nature, let us lay a trap for the Public Prosecutor; we shall be doing our friend Gatien a service, and get a laugh out of it. I do not love Public Prosecutors.'

'You have a keen intuition of destiny,' said Horace. 'But what can we do?'

'Well, after dinner we will tell sundry little anecdotes of wives caught out by their husbands, killed, murdered under the most terrible circumstances.—Then we shall see the faces that Madame de La Baudraye and de Clagny will make.'

'Not amiss!' said Bianchon; 'one or the other must surely, by look or gesture——'

'I know a newspaper editor,' Lousteau went on, addressing Gatien, 'who, anxious to forefend a grievous fate, will take no stories but such as tell the tale of lovers burned, hewn, pounded, or cut to pieces; of wives boiled, fried, or baked; he takes them to his wife to read, hoping that sheer fear will keep her faithful—satisfied with that humble alternative, poor man! "You see, my dear, to what the smallest error may lead you!" says he, epitomising Arnolfe's address to Agnès.'

'Madame de La Baudraye is quite guiltless; this youth sees double,' said Bianchon. 'Madame Piédefer seems to me far too pious to invite her daughter's lover

to the Château d'Anzy. Madame de La Baudraye would have to hoodwink her mother, her husband, her maid, and her mother's maid; that is too much to do. I acquit her.'

'With the more reason because her husband never "quits her,"' said Gatien, laughing at his own wit.

'We can easily remember two or three stories that will make Dinah quake,' said Lousteau. 'Young man —and you too, Bianchon—let me beg you to maintain a stern demeanour; be thorough diplomatists, an easy manner without exaggeration, and watch the faces of the two criminals, you know, without seeming to do so —out of the corner of your eye, or in a glass, on the sly. This morning we will hunt the hare, this evening we will hunt the Public Prosecutor.'

The evening began with a triumph for Lousteau, who returned the album to the lady with this elegy written in it:—

SPLEEN

You ask for verse from me, the feeble prey
Of this self-seeking world, a waif and stray
With none to whom to cling;
From me—unhappy, purblind, hopeless devil!
Who e'en in what is good see only evil
In any earthly thing!

This page, the pastime of a dame so fair,
May not reflect the shadow of my care,
For all things have their place.
Of love, to ladies bright, the poet sings,
Of joy, and balls, and dress, and dainty things—
Nay, or of God and Grace.

It were a bitter jest to bid the pen
Of one so worn with life, so hating men,
Depict a scene of joy.
Would you exult in sight to one born blind,
Or—cruel! of a mother's love remind
Some hapless orphan boy?

When cold despair has gripped a heart still fond,
When there is no young heart that will respond
To it in love, the future is a lie.
If there is none to weep when he is sad,
And share his woe, a man were better dead !—
And so I soon must die.

Give me your pity ! often I blaspheme
The sacred name of God. Does it not seem
That I was born in vain ?
Why should I bless Him ? Or why thank Him, since
He might have made me handsome, rich, a prince—
And I am poor and plain ?

Etienne Lousteau.

September 1836, Château d'Anzy.

'And you have written those verses since yesterday ? cried Clagny in a suspicious tone.

'Dear me, yes, as I was following the game ; it is only too evident ? I would gladly have done something better for Madame.'

'The verses are exquisite !' cried Dinah, casting up her eyes to heaven.

'They are, alas ! the expression of a too genuine feeling,' replied Lousteau, in a tone of deep dejection.

The reader will, of course, have guessed that the journalist had stored these lines in his memory for ten years at least, for he had written them at the time of the Restoration in disgust at being unable to get on. Madame de la Baudraye gazed at him with such pity as the woes of genius inspire ; and Monsieur de Clagny, who caught her expression, turned in hatred against this sham *Jeune Malade*.[1] He sat down to backgammon with the curé of Sancerre. The Presiding Judge's son was so extremely obliging as to place a lamp near the two players in such a way as that the light fell full on Madame de la Baudraye, who took up her work ; she

[1] The name of an Elegy written by Millevoye.

was embroidering in coarse wool a wicker-plait paper-basket. The three conspirators sat close at hand.

'For whom are you decorating that pretty basket, Madame?' said Lousteau. 'For some charity lottery, perhaps?'

'No,' said she, 'I think there is too much display in charity done to the sound of a trumpet.'

'You are very indiscreet,' said Monsieur Gravier.

'Can there be any indiscretion,' said Lousteau, 'in inquiring who the happy mortal may be in whose room that basket is to stand?'

'There is no happy mortal in the case,' said Dinah; 'it is for Monsieur de La Baudraye.'

The Public Prosecutor looked slily at Madame de La Baudraye and her work, as if he had said to himself, 'I have lost my paper-basket!'

'Why, Madame, may we not think him happy in having a lovely wife, happy in her decorating his paper-baskets so charmingly? The colours are red and black, like Robin Goodfellow. If ever I marry, I only hope that twelve years after, my wife's embroidered baskets may still be for me.'

'And why should they not be for you?' said the lady, fixing her fine grey eyes, full of invitation, on Étienne's face.

'Parisians believe in nothing,' said the lawyer bitterly. 'The virtue of women is doubted above all things with terrible insolence. Yes, for some time past the books you have written, you Paris authors, your farces, your dramas, all your atrocious literature turn on adultery——'

'Come, come, Monsieur the Public Prosecutor,' retorted Étienne, laughing, 'I left you to play your game in peace, I did not attack you, and here you are bringing an indictment against me. On my honour as a journalist, I have launched above a hundred articles against the writers you speak of; but I confess that in attacking them it was to attempt something like

criticism. Be just; if you condemn them, you must condemn Homer, whose *Iliad* turns on Helen of Troy; you must condemn Milton's *Paradise Lost.* Eve and her serpent seem to me a pretty little case of symbolical adultery; you must suppress the Psalms of David, inspired by the highly adulterous love affairs of that Louis XIV. of Judah; you must make a bonfire of *Mithridate*, *le Tartuffe*, *l'École des Femmes*, *Phèdre*, *Andromaque*, *le Mariage de Figaro*, Dante's *Inferno*, Petrarch's Sonnets, all the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the romances of the Middle Ages, the History of France and of Rome, etc. etc. Excepting Bossuet's *Histoire des Variations* and Pascal's *Provinciales*, I do not think there are many books left to read if you insist on eliminating all those in which illicit love is mentioned.'

'Much loss that would be!' said Monsieur de Clagny.

Étienne, nettled by the superior air assumed by Monsieur de Clagny, wanted to infuriate him by one of those cold-drawn jests which consist in defending an opinion in which we have no belief, simply to rouse the wrath of a poor man who argues in good faith; a regular journalist's pleasantry.

'If we take up the political attitude into which you would force yourself,' he went on, without heeding the lawyer's remark, 'and assume the part of Public Prosecutor of all the ages—for every Government has its public ministry—well, the Catholic religion is infected at its fountain-head by a startling instance of illegal union. In the opinion of King Herod, and of Pilate as representing the Roman Empire, Joseph's wife figured as an adulteress, since, by her own avowal, Joseph was not the father of Jesus. The heathen judge could no more recognise the Immaculate Conception than you yourself would admit the possibility of such a miracle if a new religion should nowadays be preached as based on

a similar mystery. Do you suppose that a judge and jury in a police court would give credence to the operation of the Holy Ghost! And yet who can venture to assert that God will never again redeem mankind? Is it any better now than it was under Tiberius?'

'Your argument is blasphemy,' said Monsieur de Clagny.

'I grant it,' said the journalist, 'but not with malicious intent. You cannot suppress historical fact. In my opinion, Pilate, when he sentenced Jesus, and Anytus—who spoke for the aristocratic party at Athens—when he insisted on the death of Socrates, both represented established social interests which held themselves legitimate, invested with co-operative powers, and obliged to defend themselves. Pilate and Anytus in their time were not less logical than the public prosecutors who demanded the heads of the sergeants of La Rochelle; who, at this day, are guillotining the republicans who take up arms against the throne as established by the revolution of July, and the innovators who aim at upsetting society for their own advantage under pretence of organising it on a better footing. In the eyes of the great families of Greece and Rome, Socrates and Jesus were criminals; to those ancient aristocracies their opinions were akin to those of the Mountain; and if their followers had been victorious, they would have produced a little "ninety-three" in the Roman Empire or in Attica.'

'What are you trying to come to, Monsieur?' asked the lawyer.

'To adultery!—For thus, Monsieur, a Buddhist as he smokes his pipe may very well assert that the Christian religion is founded in adultery; as we believe that Mahomet is an impostor; that his Koran is an epitome of the Old Testament and the Gospels; and that God never had the least intention of constituting that camel-driver His Prophet.'

'If there were many men like you in France—and there are more than enough, unfortunately—all government would be impossible.'

'And there would be no religion at all,' said Madame Piédefer, who had been making strangely wry faces all through this discussion.

'You are paining them very much,' said Bianchon to Lousteau in an undertone. 'Do not talk of religion; you are saying things that are enough to upset them.'

'If I were a writer or a romancer,' said Monsieur Gravier, 'I should take the side of the luckless husbands. I, who have seen many things, and strange things too, know that among the ranks of deceived husbands there are some whose attitude is not devoid of energy, men who, at a crisis, can be very dramatic, to use one of your words, Monsieur,' he said, addressing Étienne.

'You are very right, my dear Monsieur Gravier,' said Lousteau. 'I never thought that deceived husbands were ridiculous; on the contrary, I think highly of them——'

'Do you not think a husband's confidence a sublime thing?' said Bianchon. 'He believes in his wife, he does not suspect her, he trusts her implicitly. But if he is so weak as to trust her, you make game of him; if he is jealous and suspicious, you hate him; what, then, I ask you, is the happy medium for a man of spirit?'

'If Monsieur de Clagny had not just expressed such vehement disapproval of the immorality of stories in which the matrimonial compact is violated, I could tell you of a husband's revenge,' said Lousteau.

Monsieur de Clagny threw the dice with a convulsive jerk, and dared not look up at the journalist.

'A story, from you!' cried Madame de La Baudraye. 'I should hardly have dared to hope for such a treat——'

'It is not my story, Madame; I am not clever enough to invent such a tragedy. It was told me—and how

delightfully !—by one of our greatest writers, the finest literary musician of our day, Charles Nodier.'

'Well, tell it,' said Dinah. 'I never met Monsieur Nodier, so you have no comparison to fear.'

'Not long after the 18th Brumaire,' Étienne began, 'there was, as you know, a call to arms in Brittany and la Vendée. The First Consul, anxious before all things for peace in France, opened negotiations with the rebel chiefs, and took energetic military measures ; but, while combining his plans of campaign with the insinuating charm of Italian diplomacy, he also set the machiavelian springs of the police in movement, Fouché then being at its head. And none of these means were superfluous to stifle the fire of war then blazing in the West.

'At this time a young man of the Maillé family was despatched by the Chouans from Brittany to Saumur, to open communications between certain magnates of that town and its environs and the leaders of the Royalist party. The envoy was, in fact, arrested on the very day he landed—for he travelled by boat, disguised as a master mariner. However, as a man of practical intelligence, he had calculated all the risks of the undertaking ; his passport and papers were all in order, and the men told off to take him were afraid of blundering.

'The Chevalier de Beauvoir—I now remember his name—had studied his part well ; he appealed to the family whose name he had borrowed, persisted in his false address, and stood his examination so boldly that he would have been set at large but for the blind belief that the spies had in their instructions, which were unfortunately only too minute. In this dilemma the authorities were more ready to risk an arbitrary act than to let a man escape to whose capture the Minister attached great importance. In those days of liberty the agents of the powers in authority cared little enough for what we now regard as *legal*. The Chevalier was therefore imprisoned provisionally, until the superior

officials should come to some decision as to his identity. He had not long to wait for it; orders were given to guard the prisoner closely in spite of his denials.

'The Chevalier de Beauvoir was next transferred, in obedience to further orders, to the Castle of l'Escarpe, a name which sufficiently indicates its situation. This fortress, perched on very high rocks, has precipices for its trenches; it is reached on all sides by steep and dangerous paths; and, like every ancient castle, its principal gate has a drawbridge over a wide moat. The commandant of this prison, delighted to have charge of a man of family whose manners were most agreeable, who expressed himself well, and seemed highly educated, received the Chevalier as a godsend; he offered him the freedom of the place on parole, that they might together the better defy its dulness. The prisoner was more than content.

'Beauvoir was a loyal gentleman, but, unfortunately, he was also a very handsome youth. He had attractive features, a dashing air, a pleasing address, and extraordinary strength. Well made, active, full of enterprise, and loving danger, he would have made an admirable leader of guerilla, and was the very man for the part. The commandant gave his prisoner the most comfortable room, entertained him at his table, and at first had nothing but praise for the Vendéen. This officer was a Corsican and married; his wife was pretty and charming, and he thought her, perhaps, not to be trusted—at any rate, he was as jealous as a Corsican and a rather ill-looking soldier may be. The lady took a fancy to Beauvoir, and he found her very much to his taste; perhaps they loved! Love in a prison is quick work. Did they commit some imprudence? Was the sentiment they entertained something warmer than the superficial gallantry which is almost a duty of men towards women?

'Beauvoir never fully explained this rather obscure

episode of the story; it is at least certain that the commandant thought himself justified in treating his prisoner with excessive severity. Beauvoir was placed in the dungeon, fed on black bread and cold water, and fettered in accordance with the time-honoured traditions of the treatment lavished on captives. His cell, under the fortress-yard, was vaulted with hard stone, the walls were of desperate thickness; the tower overlooked the precipice.

'When the luckless man had convinced himself of the impossibility of escape, he fell into those day-dreams which are at once the comfort and the crowning despair of prisoners. He gave himself up to the trifles which in such cases seem so important; he counted the hours and the days; he studied the melancholy trade of being prisoner; he became absorbed in himself, and learned the value of air and sunshine; then, at the end of a fortnight; he was attacked by that terrible malady, that fever for liberty, which drives prisoners to those heroic efforts of which the prodigious achievements seem to us impossible, though true, and which my friend the doctor' (and he turned to Bianchon) 'would perhaps ascribe to some unknown forces too recondite for his physiological analysis to detect, some mysteries of the human will of which the obscurity baffles science.'

Bianchon shook his head in negation.

'Beauvoir was eating his heart out, for death alone could set him free. One morning the turnkey, whose duty it was to bring him his food, instead of leaving him when he had given him his meagre pittance, stood with his arms folded, looking at him with strange meaning. Conversation between them was generally brief, and the warder never began it. The Chevalier was therefore greatly surprised when the man said to him: "Of course, Monsieur, you know your own business when you insist on being always called Monsieur Lebrun, or citizen Lebrun. It is no concern of mine; ascertaining

your name is no part of my duty. It is all the same to me whether you call yourself Peter or Paul. If every man minds his own business, the cows will not stray. At the same time, *I* know," said he, with a wink, "that you are Monsieur Charles-Félix-Théodore, Chevalier de Beauvoir, and cousin to Madame la Duchesse de Maillé. —Heh?" he added after a short silence, during which he looked at his prisoner.

'Beauvoir, seeing that he was safe under lock and key, did not imagine that his position could be any the worse if his real name were known.

'"Well, and supposing I were the Chevalier de Beauvoir, what should I gain by that?" said he.

'"Oh, there is everything to be gained by it," replied the gaoler in an undertone. "I have been paid to help you to get away; but wait a minute! If I were suspected in the smallest degree, I should be shot out of hand. So I have said that I will do no more in the matter than will just earn the money.—Look here," said he, taking a small file out of his pocket, "this is your key; with this you can cut through one of your bars. By the Mass, but it will not be an easy job," he went on, glancing at the narrow loophole that let daylight into the dungeon.

'It was in a splayed recess under the deep cornice that ran round the top of the tower, between the brackets that supported the embrasures.

'"Monsieur," said the man, "you must take care to saw through the iron low enough to get your body through."

'"I will get through, never fear," said the prisoner.

'"But high enough to leave a stanchion to fasten a cord to," the warder went on.

'"And where is the cord?" asked Beauvoir.

'"Here," said the man, throwing down a knotted rope. "It is made of ravelled linen, that you may be supposed to have contrived it yourself, and it is long

enough. When you have got to the bottom knot, let yourself drop gently, and the rest you must manage for yourself. You will probably find a carriage somewhere in the neighbourhood, and friends looking out for you. But I know nothing about that.—I need not remind you that there is a man-at-arms to the right of the tower. You will take care, of course, to choose a dark night, and wait till the sentinel is asleep. You must take your chance of being shot; but——"

'"All right! All right! At least I shall not rot here," cried the young man.

'"Well, that may happen nevertheless," replied the gaoler, with a stupid expression.

'Beauvoir thought this was merely one of the aimless remarks that such folks indulge in. The hope of freedom filled him with such joy that he could not be troubled to consider the words of a man who was no more than a better sort of peasant. He set to work at once, and had filed the bars through in the course of the day. Fearing a visit from the Governor, he stopped up the breaches with bread crumb rubbed in rust to make it look like the iron; he hid his rope, and waited for a favourable night with the intensity of anticipation, the deep anguish of soul that makes a prisoner's life dramatic.

'At last, one murky night, an autumn night, he finished cutting through the bars, tied the cord firmly to the stump, and perched himself on the sill outside, holding on by one hand to the piece of iron remaining. Then he waited for the darkest hour of the night, when the sentinels would probably be asleep; this would be not long before dawn. He knew the hours of their rounds, the length of each watch, every detail with which prisoners, almost involuntarily, become familiar. He waited till the moment when one of the men-at-arms had spent two-thirds of his watch and gone into his box for shelter from the fog. Then, feeling sure



that the chances were at the best for his escape, he let himself down knot by knot, hanging between earth and sky, and clinging to his rope with the strength of a giant. All was well. At the last knot but one, just as he was about to let himself drop, a prudent impulse led him to feel for the ground with his feet, and he found no footing. The predicament was awkward for a man bathed in sweat, tired, and perplexed, and in a position where his life was at stake on even chances. He was about to risk it, when a trivial incident stopped him; his hat fell off; happily, he listened for the noise it must make in striking the ground, and he heard not a sound.

'The prisoner felt vaguely suspicious as to this state of affairs. He began to wonder whether the Commandant had not laid a trap for him—but if so, why? Torn by doubts, he almost resolved to postpone the attempt till another night. At any rate, he would wait for the first gleam of day, when it would still not be impossible to escape. His great strength enabled him to climb up again to his window; still, he was almost exhausted by the time he gained the sill, where he crouched on the look-out, exactly like a cat on the parapet of a gutter. Before long, by the pale light of dawn, he perceived as he waved the rope that there was a little interval of a hundred feet between the lowest knot and the pointed rocks below.

'"Thank you, my friend the Governor!" said he, with characteristic coolness. Then, after a brief meditation on this skilfully-planned revenge, he thought it wise to return to his cell.

'He laid his outer clothes conspicuously on the bed, left the rope outside to make it seem that he had fallen, and hid himself behind the door to await the arrival of the treacherous turnkey, arming himself with one of the iron bars he had filed out. The gaoler, who returned rather earlier than usual to secure the dead man's

leavings, opened the door, whistling as he came in; but when he was at arm's length, Beauvoir hit him such a tremendous blow on the head that the wretch fell in a heap without a cry; the bar had cracked his skull.

'The Chevalier hastily stripped him and put on his clothes, mimicked his walk, and, thanks to the early hour and the undoubting confidence of the warders of the great gate, he walked out and away.'

It did not seem to strike either the lawyer or Madame de La Baudraye that there was in this narrative the least illusion that should apply to them. Those in the little plot looked inquiringly at each other, evidently surprised at the perfect coolness of the two supposed lovers.

'Oh! I can tell you a better story than that,' said Bianchon.

'Let us hear,' said the audience, at a sign from Lousteau, conveying that Bianchon had a reputation as a story-teller.

Among the stock of narratives he had in store, for every clever man has a fund of anecdotes as Madame de La Baudraye had a collection of phrases, the doctor chose that which is known as *La Grande Bretèche*, and is so famous indeed, that it was put on the stage at the *Gymnase-Dramatique* under the title of *Valentine*. So it is not necessary to repeat it here, though it was then new to the inhabitants of the Château d'Anzy. And it was told with the same finish of gesture and tone which had won such praise for Bianchon when at Mademoiselle des Touches' supper-party he had told it for the first time. The final picture of the Spanish grandee, starved to death where he stood in the cupboard walled up by Madame de Merret's husband, and that husband's last word as he replied to his wife's entreaty, 'You swore on that crucifix that there was no one in the closet!' produced their full effect. There was a silent minute, highly flattering to Bianchon.

'Do you know, gentlemen,' said Madame de La Baudraye, 'love must be a mighty thing that it can tempt a woman to put herself in such a position?'

'I, who have certainly seen some strange things in the course of my life,' said Gravier, 'was cognisant in Spain of an adventure of the same kind.'

'You come forward after two great performers,' said Madame de La Baudraye, with coquettish flattery, as she glanced at the two Parisians. 'But never mind—proceed.'

'Some little time after his entry into Madrid,' said the Receiver-General, 'the Grand Duke of Berg invited the magnates of the capital to an entertainment given to the newly conquered city by the French army. In spite of the splendour of the affair, the Spaniards were not very cheerful; their ladies hardly danced at all, and most of the company sat down to cards. The gardens of the Duke's palace were so brilliantly illuminated, that the ladies could walk about in as perfect safety as in broad daylight. The fête was of imperial magnificence. Nothing was grudged to give the Spaniards a high idea of the Emperor, if they were to measure him by the standard of his officers.

'In an arbour near the house, between one and two in the morning, a party of French officers were discussing the chances of war, and the not too hopeful outlook prognosticated by the conduct of the Spaniards present at that grand ball.

'"I can only tell you," said the surgeon-major of the company of which I was paymaster, "I applied formally to Prince Murat only yesterday to be recalled. Without being afraid exactly of leaving my bones in the Peninsula, I would rather dress the wounds made by our worthy neighbours the Germans. Their weapons do not run quite so deep into the body as these Castilian daggers. Besides, a certain dread of Spain is, with me, a sort of superstition. From my earliest youth

I have read Spanish books, and a heap of gloomy romances and tales of adventures in this country have given me a serious prejudice against its manners and customs.

'"Well, now, since my arrival in Madrid, I have already been, not indeed the hero, but the accomplice of a dangerous intrigue, as dark and mysterious as any romance by Lady [Mrs.] Radcliffe. I am apt to attend to my presentiments, and I am off to-morrow. Murat will not refuse me leave, for, thanks to our varied services, we always have influential friends."

'"Since you mean to cut your stick, tell us what's up," said an old Republican colonel, who cared not a rap for Imperial gentility and choice language.

'The surgeon-major looked about him cautiously, as if to make sure who were his audience, and being satisfied that no Spaniard was within hearing, he said—

'"We are none but Frenchmen—then, with pleasure, Colonel Hulot. About six days since, I was quietly going home, at about eleven at night, after leaving General Montcornet, whose hotel is but a few yards from mine. We had come away together from the Quartermaster-General's, where we had played rather high at *bouillotte*. Suddenly, at the corner of a narrow side-street, two strangers, or rather, two demons, rushed upon me and flung a large cloak round my head and arms. I yelled out, as you may suppose, like a dog that is thrashed, but the cloth smothered my voice, and I was lifted into a chaise with dexterous rapidity. When my two companions released me from the cloak, I heard these dreadful words spoken by a woman, in bad French—

'"'If you cry out, or if you attempt to escape, if you make the very least suspicious demonstration, the gentleman opposite to you will stab you without hesitation. So you had better keep quiet.—Now, I will tell you why you have been carried off. If you will take the trouble

to put your hand out in this direction, you will find your case of instruments lying between us; we sent a messenger for them to your rooms, in your name. You will need them. We are taking you to a house that you may save the honour of a lady who is about to give birth to a child that she wishes to place in this gentleman's keeping without her husband's knowledge. Though Monsieur rarely leaves his wife, with whom he is still passionately in love, watching over her with all the vigilance of Spanish jealousy, she has succeeded in concealing her condition; he believes her to be ill. You must bring the child into the world. The dangers of this enterprise do not concern us: only, you must obey us, otherwise the lover, who is sitting opposite to you in this carriage, and who does not understand a word of French, will kill you on the least rash movement.'

'"'And who are you?' I asked, feeling for the speaker's hand, for her arm was inside the sleeve of a soldier's uniform.

'"'I am my lady's waiting-woman,' said she, 'and ready to reward you with my own person if you show yourself gallant and helpful in our necessities.'

'"'Gladly,' said I, seeing that I was inevitably started on a perilous adventure.

'"Under favour of the darkness, I felt whether the person and figure of the girl were in keeping with the idea I had formed of her from her tone of voice. The good soul had, no doubt, made up her mind from the first to accept all the chances of this strange act of kidnapping, for she kept silence very obligingly, and the coach had not been more that ten minutes on the way when she accepted and returned a very satisfactory kiss. The lover, who sat opposite to me, took no offence at an occasional quite involuntary kick; as he did not understand French, I conclude he paid no heed to them.

'"'I can be your mistress on one condition only,' said the woman, in reply to the nonsense I poured into her

ear, carried away by the fervour of an improvised passion, to which everything was unpropitious.

'"'And what is it?'

'"'That you will never attempt to find out whose servant I am. If I am to go to you, it must be at night, and you must receive me in the dark.'

'"'Very good,' said I.

'"We had got as far as this, when the carriage drew up under a garden wall.

'"'You must allow me to bandage your eyes,' said the maid. 'You can lean on my arm, and I will lead you.'

'"She tied a handkerchief over my eyes, fastening it in a tight knot at the back of my head. I heard the sound of a key being cautiously fitted to the lock of a little side door by the speechless lover who had sat opposite to me. In a moment the waiting-woman, whose shape was slender, and who walked with an elegant jauntiness"—*meneho*, as they call it,' Monsieur Gravier explained in a superior tone, 'a word which describes the swing which women contrive to give a certain part of their dress that shall be nameless.—"The waiting-woman"—it is the surgeon-major who is speaking,' the narrator went on—'"led me along the gravel walks of a large garden, till at a certain spot she stopped. From the louder sound of our footsteps, I concluded that we were close to the house. 'Now silence!' said she in a whisper, 'and mind what you are about. Do not overlook one of my signals; I cannot speak without terrible danger for both of us, and at this moment your life is of the first importance.' Then she added: 'My mistress is in a room on the ground floor. To get into it we must pass through her husband's room and close to his bed. Do not cough, walk softly, and follow me closely, so as not to knock against the furniture or tread anywhere but on the carpets I laid down.'

'"Here the lover gave an impatient growl, as a man annoyed by so much delay.

'"The woman said no more, I heard a door open, I felt the warm air of the house, and we stole in like thieves. Presently the girl's light hand removed the bandage. I found myself in a lofty and spacious room, badly lighted by a smoky lamp. The window was open, but the jealous husband had fitted it with iron bars. I was in the bottom of a sack, as it were.

'"On the ground a woman was lying on a mat; her head was covered with a muslin veil, but I could see her eyes through it full of tears and flashing with the brightness of stars; she held a handkerchief in her mouth, biting it so hard that her teeth were set in it: I never saw finer limbs, but her body was writhing with pain like a harp-string thrown on the fire. The poor creature had made a sort of struts of her legs by setting her feet against a chest of drawers, and with both hands she held on to the bar of a chair, her arms outstretched, with every vein painfully swelled. She might have been a criminal undergoing torture. But she did not utter a cry; there was not a sound but the dull cracking of her joints. There we stood, all three speechless and motionless. The husband snored with reassuring regularity. I wanted to study the waiting-woman's face, but she had put on a mask, which she had removed, no doubt, during our drive, and I could see nothing but a pair of black eyes and a pleasingly rounded figure.

'"The lover threw some towels over his mistress's legs and folded the muslin veil double over her face. As soon as I had examined the lady with care, I perceived from certain symptoms which I had noted once before on a very sad occasion in my life, that the infant was dead. I turned to the maid in order to tell her this. Instantly the suspicious stranger drew his dagger; but I had time to explain the matter to the woman, who explained in a word or two to him in a low voice. On hearing my opinion, a quick, slight shudder ran through him from head to foot like a lightning flash; I fancied

I could see him turn pale under his black velvet mask.

'"The waiting-woman took advantage of a moment when he was bending in despair over the dying woman, who had turned blue, to point to some glasses of lemonade standing on a table, at the same time shaking her head negatively. I understood that I was not to drink anything in spite of the dreadful thirst that parched my throat. The lover was thirsty too; he took an empty glass, poured ont some fresh lemonade, and drank it off.

'"At this moment the lady had a violent attack of pain, which showed me that now was the time to operate. I summoned all my courage, and in about an hour had succeeded in delivering her of the child, cutting it up to extract it. The Spaniard no longer thought of poisoning me, understanding that I had saved the mother's life. Large tears fell on his cloak. The woman uttered no sound, but she trembled like a hunted animal, and was bathed in sweat.

'"At one horribly critical moment she pointed in the direction of her husband's room; he had turned in his sleep, and she alone had heard the rustle of the sheets, the creaking of the bed or of the curtain. We all paused, and the lover and the waiting-woman, through the eyeholes of their masks, gave each other a look that said, 'If he wakes, shall we kill him?'

'"At that instant I put out my hand to take the glass of lemonade the Spaniard had drunk part of. He, thinking that I was about to take one of the full glasses, sprang forward like a cat, and laid his long dagger over the two poisoned goblets, leaving me his own, and signing to me to drink what was left. So much was conveyed by this quick action, and it was so full of good feeling, that I forgave him his atrocious schemes for killing me, and thus burying every trace of this event.

'"After two hours of care and alarms, the maid and I

put her mistress to bed. The lover, forced into so perilous an adventure, had, to provide means in case of having to fly, a packet of diamonds stuck to paper; these he put into my pocket without my knowing it; and I may add parenthetically, that as I was ignorant of the Spaniard's magnificent gift, my servant stole the jewels the day after, and went off with a perfect fortune.

'"I whispered my instructions to the waiting-woman as to the further care of her patient, and wanted to be gone. The maid remained with her mistress, which was not very reassuring, but I was on my guard. The lover made a bundle of the dead infant and the bloodstained cloths, tying it up tightly, and hiding it under his cloak; he passed his hand over my eyes as if to bid me to see nothing, and signed to me to take hold of the skirt of his coat. He went first out of the room, and I followed, not without a parting glance at my lady of an hour. She, seeing the Spaniard had gone out, snatched off her mask and showed me an exquisite face.

'"When I found myself in the garden, in the open air, I confess that I breathed as if a heavy load had been lifted from my breast. I followed my guide at a respectful distance, watching his least movement with keen attention. Having reached the little door, he took my hand and pressed a seal to my lips, set in a ring which I had seen him wearing on a finger of his left hand, and I gave him to understand that this significant sign would be obeyed. In the street two horses were waiting; we each mounted one. My Spaniard took my bridle, held his own between his teeth, for his right hand held the bloodstained bundle, and we went off at lightning speed.

'"I could not see the smallest object by which to retrace the road we came by. At dawn I found myself close by my own door, and the Spaniard fled towards the Atocha gate."

'"And you saw nothing which could lead you to

suspect who the woman was whom you had attended?" the Colonel asked of the surgeon.

'"One thing only," he replied. "When I turned the unknown lady over, I happened to remark a mole on her arm, about half-way down, as big as a lentil, and surrounded with brown hairs."—At this instant the rash speaker turned pale. All our eyes, that had been fixed on his, followed his glance, and we saw a Spaniard, whose glittering eyes shone through a clump of orange-trees. On finding himself the object of our attention, the man vanished with the swiftness of a sylph. A young captain rushed in pursuit.

'"By Heaven!" cried the surgeon, "that basilisk stare has chilled me through, my friends. I can hear bells ringing in my ears! I may take leave of you; you will bury me here!"

'"What a fool you are!" exclaimed Colonel Hulot. "Falcon is on the track of the Spaniard who was listening, and he will call him to account."

'"Well," cried one and another, seeing the captain return quite out of breath.

'"The devil's in it," said Falcon; "the man went through a wall, I believe! As I do not suppose that he is a wizard, I fancy he must belong to the house! He knows every corner and turning, and easily escaped."

'"I am done for," said the surgeon, in a gloomy voice.

'"Come, come, keep calm, Béga," said I (his name was Béga), "we will sit on watch with you till you leave. We will not leave you this evening."

'In point of fact, three young officers who had been losing at play went home with the surgeon to his lodgings, and one of us offered to stay with him.

'Within two days Béga had obtained his recall to France; he made arrangements to travel with a lady to whom Murat had given a strong escort, and had just finished dinner with a party of friends, when his servant

came to say that a young lady wished to speak to him. The surgeon and the three officers went down suspecting mischief. The stranger could only say, "Be on your guard——" when she dropped down dead. It was the waiting-woman, who, finding she had been poisoned, had hoped to arrive in time to warn her lover.

'"Devil take it!" cried Captain Falcon, "that is what I call love! No woman on earth but a Spaniard can run about with a dose of poison in her inside!"

'Béga remained strangely pensive. To drown the dark presentiments that haunted him, he sat down to table again, and with his companions drank immoderately. The whole party went early to bed, half drunk.

'In the middle of the night the hapless Béga was aroused by the sharp rattle of the curtain rings pulled violently along the rods. He sat up in bed, in the mechanical trepidation which we all feel on waking with such a start. He saw standing before him a Spaniard wrapped in a cloak, who fixed on him the same burning gaze that he had seen through the bushes.

'Béga shouted out, "Help, help, come at once, friends!" But the Spaniard answered his cry of distress with a bitter laugh.—"Opium grows for all!' said he.

'Having thus pronounced sentence as it were, the stranger pointed to the three other men sleeping soundly, took from under his cloak the arm of a woman, freshly amputated, and held it out to Béga, pointing to a mole like that he had so rashly described. "Is it the same?" he asked. By the light of the lantern the man had set on the bed, Béga recognised the arm, and his speechless amazement was answer enough.

'Without waiting for further information, the lady's husband stabbed him to the heart.'

'You must tell that to the marines!' said Lousteau. 'It needs their robust faith to swallow it! Can you tell me which told the tale, the dead man or the Spaniard?'

'Monsieur,' replied the Receiver-General, 'I nursed poor Béga, who died five days after in dreadful suffering.—That is not the end.

'At the time of the expedition sent out to restore Ferdinand VII. I was appointed to a place in Spain; but, happily for me, I had got no further than Tours when I was promised the post of Receiver here at Sancerre. On the eve of setting out I was at a ball at Madame de Listomère's, where we were to meet several Spaniards of high rank. On rising from the card-table, I saw a Spanish grandee, an *afrancesado* in exile, who had been about a fortnight in Touraine. He had arrived very late at this ball—his first appearance in society—accompanied by his wife, whose right arm was perfectly motionless. Everybody made way in silence for this couple, whom we all watched with some excitement. Imagine a picture by Murillo come to life. Under black and hollow brows the man's eyes were like a fixed blaze; his face looked dried up, his bald skull was red, and his frame was a terror to behold, he was so emaciated. His wife—no, you cannot imagine her. Her figure had the supple swing for which the Spaniards created the word *meneho*; though pale, she was still beautiful; her complexion was dazzlingly fair—a rare thing in a Spaniard; and her gaze, full of the Spanish sun, fell on you like a stream of melted lead.

'"Madame," said I to her, towards the end of the evening, "what occurrence led to the loss of your arm?"

'"I lost it in the war of independence," said she.'

'Spain is a strange country,' said Madame de la Baudraye. 'It still shows traces of Arab manners.'

'Oh!' said the journalist, laughing, 'the mania for cutting off arms is an old one there. It turns up again every now and then like some of our newspaper hoaxes, for the subject has given plots for plays on the Spanish stage so early as 1570——'

'Then do you think me capable of inventing such a story?' said Monsieur Gravier, nettled by Lousteau's impertinent tone.

'Quite incapable of such a thing,' said the journalist with grave irony.

'Pooh!' said Bianchon, 'the inventions of romances and play-writers are quite as often transferred from their books and pieces into real life, as the events of real life are made use of on the stage or adapted to a tale. I have seen the comedy of *Tartufe* played out—with the exception of the close; Orgon's eyes could not be opened to the truth.'

'And the tragi-comedy of *Adolphe* by Benjamin Constant is constantly enacted,' cried Lousteau.

'And do you suppose,' asked Madame de La Baudraye, 'that such adventures as Monsieur Gravier has related could ever occur now, and in France?'

'Dear me!' cried Clagny, 'of the ten or twelve startling crimes that are annually committed in France, quite half are mixed up with circumstances at least as extraordinary as these, and often outdoing them in romantic details. Indeed, is not this proved by the reports in the *Gazette des Tribunaux*—the Police News—in my opinion, one of the worst abuses of the Press? This newspaper, which was started only in 1826 or -27, was not in existence when I began my professional career, and the facts of the crime I am about to speak of were not known beyond the limits of the department where it was committed.

'In the quarter of Saint-Pierre-des-Corps at Tours, a woman whose husband had disappeared at the time when the army of the Loire was disbanded, and who had mourned him deeply, was conspicuous for her excess of devotion. When the mission priests went through all the provinces to restore the crosses that had been destroyed and to efface the traces of revolutionary impiety, this widow was one of their most zealous proselytes, she

carried a cross and nailed to it a silver heart pierced by an arrow; and, for a long time after, she went every evening to pray at the foot of the cross which was erected behind the Cathedral apse.

'At last, overwhelmed by remorse, she confessed to a horrible crime. She had killed her husband, as Fualdès was murdered, by bleeding him; she had salted the body and packed it in pieces into old casks, exactly as if it had been pork; and for a long time she had taken a piece every morning and thrown it into the Loire. Her confessor consulted his superiors, and told her that it would be his duty to inform the public prosecutor. The woman awaited the action of the Law. The public prosecutor and the examining judge, on examining the cellar, found the husband's head still in pickle in one of the casks.—"Wretched woman," said the judge to the accused, "since you were so barbarous as to throw your husband's body piecemeal into the river, why did you not get rid of the head? Then there would have been no proof."

'"I often tried, Monsieur," said she, "but it was too heavy."'

'Well, and what became of the woman?' asked the two Parisians.

'She was sentenced and executed at Tours,' replied the lawyer; 'but her repentance and piety had attracted interest in spite of her monstrous crime.'

'And do you suppose,' said Bianchon, 'that we know all the tragedies that are played out behind the curtain of private life that the public never lifts?—It seems to me that human justice is ill adapted to judge of crimes as between husband and wife. It has every right to intervene as the police; but in equity it knows nothing of the heart of the matter.'

'The victim has in many cases been for so long the tormentor,' said Madame de La Baudraye guilelessly, 'that the crime would sometimes seem almost excusable if the accused could tell all.'

This reply, led up to by Bianchon and by the story which Clagny had told, left the two Parisians excessively puzzled as to Dinah's position.

At bedtime council was held, one of those discussions which take place in the passages of old country-houses where the bachelors linger, candle in hand, for mysterious conversations.

Monsieur Gravier was now informed of the object in view during this entertaining evening which had brought Madame de La Baudraye's innocence to light.

'But, after all,' said Lousteau, 'our hostess's serenity may indicate deep depravity instead of the most child-like innocence. The Public Prosecutor looks to me quite capable of suggesting that little La Baudraye should be put in pickle——'

'He is not to return till to-morrow; who knows what may happen in the course of the night?' said Gatien.

'We will know!' cried Monsieur Gravier.

In the life of a country house a number of practical jokes are considered admissible, some of them odiously treacherous. Monsieur Gravier, who had seen so much of the world, proposed setting seals on the doors of Madame de La Baudraye and of the Public Prosecutor. The ducks that denounced the poet Ibycus are as nothing in comparison with the single hair that these country spies fasten across the opening of a door by means of two little flattened pills of wax, fixed so high up, or so low down, that the trick is never suspected. If the gallant comes out of his own door and opens the other, the broken hair tells the tale.

When everybody was supposed to be asleep, the doctor, the journalist, the receiver of taxes, and Gatien came barefoot, like robbers, and silently fastened up the two doors, agreeing to come again at five in the morning to examine the state of the fastenings. Imagine their astonishment and Gatien's delight when all four,

candle in hand, and with hardly any clothes on, came to look at the hairs, and found them in perfect preservation on both doors.

'Is it the same wax?' asked Monsieur Gravier.

'Are they the same hairs?' asked Lousteau.

'Yes,' replied Gatien.

'This quite alters the matter!' cried Lousteau. 'You have been beating the bush for a will-o'-the-wisp.'

Monsieur Gravier and Gatien exchanged questioning glances which were meant to convey, 'Is there not something offensive to us in that speech? Ought we to laugh or to be angry?'

'If Dinah is virtuous,' said the journalist in a whisper to Bianchon, 'she is worth an effort on my part to pluck the fruit of her first love.'

The idea of carrying by storm a fortress that had for nine years stood out against the besiegers of Sancerre smiled on Lousteau.

With this notion in his head, he was the first to go down and into the garden, hoping to meet his hostess. And this chance fell out all the more easily because Madame de La Baudraye on her part wished to converse with her critic. Half such chances are planned.

'You were out shooting yesterday, Monsieur,' said Madame de La Baudraye. 'This morning I am rather puzzled as to how to find you any new amusement; unless you would like to come to La Baudraye, where you may study more of our provincial life than you can see here, for you have made but one mouthful of my absurdities. However, the saying about the handsomest girl in the world is not less true of the poor provincial woman!'

'That little simpleton Gatien has, I suppose, repeated to you a speech I made simply to make him confess that he adored you,' said Étienne. 'Your silence, during dinner the day before yesterday and throughout the evening, was enough to betray one of those indiscretions

which we never commit in Paris.—What can I say? I do not flatter myself that you will understand me. In fact, I laid a plot for the telling of all those stories yesterday solely to see whether I could rouse you and Monsieur de Clagny to a pang of remorse.—Oh! be quite easy; your innocence is fully proved.

'If you had the slightest fancy for that estimable magistrate, you would have lost all your value in my eyes.—I love perfection.

'You do not, you cannot love that cold, dried-up, taciturn little usurer on wine casks and land, who would leave any man in the lurch for twenty-five centimes on a renewal. Oh, I have fully recognised Monsieur de La Baudraye's similarity to a Parisian bill-discounter; their nature is identical.—At eight-and-twenty, handsome, well conducted, and childless—I assure you, Madame, I never saw the problem of virtue more admirably expressed.—The author of *Paquita la Sevillane* must have dreamed many dreams!

'I can speak of such things without the hypocritical gloss lent them by young men, for I am old before my time. I have no illusions left. Can a man have any illusions in the trade I follow?'

By opening the game in this tone, Lousteau cut out all excursions in the *Pays de Tendre*, where genuine passion beats the bush so long; he went straight to the point and placed himself in a position to force the offer of what women often make a man pray for, for years; witness the hapless Public Prosecutor, to whom the greatest favour had consisted in clasping Dinah's hand to his heart more tenderly than usual as they walked, happy man!

And Madame de La Baudraye, to be true to her reputation as a Superior Woman, tried to console the Manfred of the Press by prophesying such a future of love as he had not had in his mind.

'You have sought pleasure,' said she, 'but you have

never loved. Believe me, true love often comes late in life. Remember Monsieur de Gentz, who fell in love in his old age with Fanny Ellsler, and left the Revolution of July to take its course while he attended the dancer's rehearsals.'

'It seems to me unlikely,' replied Lousteau. 'I can still believe in love, but I have ceased to believe in woman. There are in me, I suppose, certain defects which hinder me from being loved, for I have often been thrown over. Perhaps I have too strong a feeling for the ideal—like all men who have looked too closely into reality——'

Madame de La Baudraye at last heard the mind of a man who, flung into the wittiest Parisian circles, represented to her its most daring axioms, its almost artless depravity, its advanced convictions; who, if he were not really superior, acted superiority extremely well. Étienne, performing before Dinah, had all the success of a first night. *Paquita* of Sancerre scented the storms, the atmosphere of Paris. She spent one of the most delightful days of her life with Lousteau and Bianchon, who told her strange tales about the great men of the day, the anecdotes which will some day form the *Ana* of our century; sayings and doings that were the common talk of Paris, but quite new to her.

Of course, Lousteau spoke very ill of the great female celebrity of Le Berry, with the obvious intention of flattering Madame de La Baudraye and leading her into literary confidences, by suggesting that she could rival so great a writer. This praise intoxicated Madame de La Baudraye; and Monsieur de Clagny, Monsieur Gravier, and Gatien, all thought her warmer in her manner to Étienne than she had been on the previous day. Dinah's three *attachés* greatly regretted having all gone to Sancerre to blow the trumpet in honour of the evening at Anzy; nothing, to hear them, had ever been so brilliant. The Hours had fled on feet so light

that none had marked their pace. The two Parisians they spoke of as perfect prodigies.

These exaggerated reports loudly proclaimed on the Mall brought sixteen persons to Anzy that evening, some in family coaches, some in waggonettes, and a few bachelors on hired saddle horses. By about seven o'clock this provincial company had made a more or less graceful entry into the huge Anzy drawing-room, which Dinah, warned of the invasion, had lighted up, giving it all the lustre it was capable of by taking the holland covers off the handsome furniture, for she regarded this assembly as one of her great triumphs. Lousteau, Bianchon, and Dinah exchanged meaning looks as they studied the attitudes and listened to the speeches of these visitors, attracted by curiosity.

What invalided ribbons, what ancestral laces, what ancient flowers, more imaginative than imitative, were boldly displayed on some perennial caps! The Présidente Boirouge, Bianchon's cousin, exchanged a few words with the doctor, from whom she extracted some 'advice gratis' by expatiating on certain pains in the chest, which she declared were nervous, but which he ascribed to chronic indigestion.

'Simply drink a cup of tea every day an hour after dinner, as the English do, and you will get over it, for what you suffer from is an English malady,' Bianchon replied very gravely.

'He is certainly a great physician,' said the Présidente, coming back to Madame de Clagny, Madame Popinot-Chandier, and Madame Gorju, the Mayor's wife.

'They say,' replied Madame de Clagny behind her fan, 'that Dinah sent for him, not so much with a view to the elections as to ascertain why she has no children.'

In the first excitement of this success, Lousteau introduced the great doctor as the only possible candidate at the ensuing elections. But Bianchon, to the great satisfaction of the new Sous-préfet, remarked that it

seemed to him almost impossible to give up science in favour of politics.

'Only a physician without a practice,' said he, 'could care to be returned as a deputy. Nominate statesmen, thinkers, men whose knowledge is universal, and who are capable of placing themselves on the high level which a legislator should occupy. That is what is lacking in our Chambers, and what our country needs.'

Two or three young ladies, some of the younger men, and the elder women stared at Lousteau as if he were a mountebank.

'Monsieur Gatien Boirouge declares that Monsieur Lousteau makes twenty thousand francs a year by his writings,' observed the Mayor's wife to Madame de Clagny. 'Can you believe it?'

'Is it possible? Why, a Public Prosecutor gets but a thousand crowns!'

'Monsieur Gatien,' said Madame Chandier, 'get Monsieur Lousteau to talk a little louder. I have not heard him yet.'

'What pretty boots he wears,' said Mademoiselle Chandier to her brother, 'and how they shine!'

'Yes—patent leather.'

'Why haven't you the same?'

Lousteau began to feel that he was too much on show, and saw in the manners of the good townsfolk indications of the desires that had brought them there.

'What trick can I play them?' thought he.

At this moment the footman, so called—a farm-servant put into livery—brought in the letters and papers, and among them a packet of proof, which the journalist left for Bianchon; for Madame de La Baudraye, on seeing the parcel, of which the form and string were obviously from the printers, exclaimed—

'What, does literature pursue you even here?'

'Not literature,' replied he, 'but a review in which I am now finishing a story to come out ten days hence. I have reached the stage of '*To be concluded in our next*,'

so I was obliged to give my address to the printer. Oh, we eat very hard-earned bread at the hands of these speculators in black and white! I will give you a description of these editors of magazines.'

'When will the conversation begin?' Madame de Clagny asked of Dinah, as one might ask, 'When do the fireworks go off?'

'I fancied we should hear some amusing stories,' said Madame Popinot to her cousin, the Présidente Boirouge.

At this moment, when the good folks of Sancerre were beginning to murmur like an impatient pit, Lousteau observed that Bianchon was lost in a meditation inspired by the wrapper round the proofs.

'What is it?' asked Étienne.

'Why, here is the most fascinating romance possible on some spoilt proof used to wrap yours in. Here, read it. *Olympia or Roman Revenge.*'

'Let us see,' said Lousteau, taking the sheet the doctor held out to him, and he read aloud as follows:—

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cavern. Rinaldo, indignant at his companions' cowardice, for they had no courage but in the open field, and dared not venture into Rome, looked at them with scorn.

'Then I go alone?' said he. He seemed to reflect, and then he went on: 'You are poor wretches. I shall proceed alone, and have the rich booty to myself.—You hear me! Farewell.'

'My Captain,' said Lamberti, 'if you should be captured without having succeeded?'

'God protects me!' said Rinaldo, pointing to the sky.

With these words he went out, and on his way he met the steward Bracciano

'That is the end of the page,' said Lousteau, to whom every one had listened devoutly.

'He is reading his work to us,' said Gatien to Madame Popinot-Chandier's son.

'From the first word, ladies,' said the journalist, jumping at an opportunity of mystifying the natives, 'it is evident that the brigands are in a cave. But how careless romancers of that date were as to details which are nowadays so closely, so elaborately studied under the name of "local colour." If the robbers were in a cavern, instead of pointing to the sky he ought to have pointed to the vault above him.—In spite of this inaccuracy, Rinaldo strikes me as a man of spirit, and his appeal to God is quite Italian. There must have been a touch of local colour in this romance. Why, what with brigands, and a cavern, and one Lamberti who could foresee future possibilities—there is a whole melodrama in that page. Add to these elements a little intrigue, a peasant maiden with her hair dressed high, short skirts, and a hundred or so of bad couplets.—Oh! the public would crowd to see it! And then Rinaldo—how well the name suits Lafont! By giving him black whiskers, tightly-fitting trousers, a cloak, a moustache, a pistol, and a peaked hat—if the manager of the Vaudeville Theatre were but bold enough to pay for a few newspaper articles, that would secure fifty performances, and six thousand francs for the author's rights, if only I were to cry it up in my columns.

'To proceed:—

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The Duchess of Bracciano found her glove. Adolphe, who had brought her back to the orange grove, might certainly have supposed that there was some purpose in her forgetfulness, for at this moment the arbour was de-

serted. The sound of the festivities was audible in the distance. The puppet show that had been promised had attracted all the guests to the ballroom. Never had Olympia looked more beautiful. Her lover's eyes met hers with an answering glow, and they understood each other. There was a moment of silence, delicious to their souls, and impossible to describe. They sat down on the same bench where they had sat in the presence of the Cavaliere Paluzzi and the laughing

'Devil take it! Our Rinaldo has vanished!' cried Lousteau. 'But a literary man once started by this page would make rapid progress in the comprehension of the plot. The Duchess Olympia is a lady who could intentionally forget her gloves in a deserted arbour.'

'Unless she may be classed between the oyster and head-clerk of an office, the two creatures nearest to marble in the zoological kingdom, it is impossible not to discern in Olympia——' Bianchon began.

'A woman of thirty,' Madame de La Baudraye hastily interposed, fearing some all too medical term.

'Then Adolphe must be two-and-twenty,' the doctor went on, 'for an Italian woman at thirty is equivalent to a Parisian of forty.'

'From these two facts, the romance may easily be reconstructed,' said Lousteau. 'And this Cavaliere Paluzzi—what a man!—The style is weak in these two passages; the author was perhaps a clerk in the Excise Office, and wrote the novel to pay his tailor!'

'In his time,' said Bianchon, 'the censor flourished; you must show as much indulgence to a man who underwent the ordeal by scissors in 1805 as to those who went to the scaffold in 1793.'

'Do you understand in the least?' asked Madame Gorju timidly of Madame de Clagny.

The Public Prosecutor's wife, who, to use a phrase of Monsieur Gravier's, might have put a Cossack to flight in 1814, straightened herself in her chair like a horseman in his stirrups, and made a face at her neighbour, conveying, 'They are looking at us; we must smile as if we understood.'

'Charming!' said the Mayoress to Gatien. 'Pray go on, Monsieur Lousteau.'

Lousteau looked at the two women, two Indian idols, and contrived to keep his countenance. He thought it desirable to say, 'Attention!' before going on as follows:—

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dress rustled in the silence. Suddenly Cardinal Borborigano stood before the Duchess.

'His face was gloomy, his brow was dark with clouds, and a bitter smile lurked in his wrinkles.

'Madam,' said he, 'you are under suspicion. If you are guilty, fly. If you are not, still fly; because, whether criminal or innocent, you will find it easier to defend yourself from a distance.'

'I thank your Eminence for your solicitude,' said she. 'The Duke of Bracciano will reappear when I find it needful to prove that he is alive.'

'Cardinal Borborigano!' exclaimed Bianchon. 'By the Pope's keys! If you do not agree with me that there is a magnificent creation in the very name, if at those words *dress rustled in the silence* you do not feel all the poetry thrown into the part of Schedoni by Mrs. Radcliffe in *The Black Penitent*, you do not deserve to read a romance.'

'For my part,' said Dinah, who had some pity on the eighteen faces gazing up at Lousteau, 'I see how the

story is progressing. I know it all. I am in Rome; I can see the body of a murdered husband whose wife, as bold as she is wicked, has made her bed on the crater of a volcano. Every night, at every kiss, she says to herself, "All will be discovered!"

'Can you see her,' said Lousteau, 'clasping Monsieur Adolphe in her arms, to her heart, throwing her whole life into a kiss?—Adolphe I see as a well-made young man, but not clever—the sort of man an Italian woman likes. Rinaldo hovers behind the scenes of a plot we do not know, but which must be as full of incident as a melodrama by Pixérécourt. Or we can imagine Rinaldo crossing the stage in the background like a figure in one of Victor Hugo's plays.'

'He, perhaps, is the husband,' exclaimed Madame de La Baudraye.

'Do you understand anything of it all?' Madame Piédefer asked of the Présidente.

'Why, it is charming!' said Dinah to her mother.

All the good folks of Sancerre sat with eyes as large as five-franc pieces.

'Go on, I beg,' said the hostess.

Lousteau went on:—

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'Your key——'
'Have you lost it?'
'It is in the arbour.'
'Let us hasten.'
'Can the Cardinal have taken it?'
'No, here it is.'
'What danger we have escaped!'

Olympia looked at the key, and fancied she recognised it as her own. But Rinaldo had changed it; his cunning had triumphed; he had the right key. Like a modern Cartouche, he was no less skilful than bold,

and suspecting that nothing but a vast treasure could require a duchess to carry it constantly at her belt.'

'Guess!' cried Lousteau. 'The corresponding page is not here. We must look to page 212 to relieve our anxiety.'

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'If the key had been lost?'
'He would now be a dead man.'
'Dead? But ought you not to grant the last request he made, and to give him his liberty on the conditions——'
'You do not know him.'
'But——'
'Silence! I took you for my lover, not for my confessor.'
Adolphe was silent.

'And then comes an exquisite galloping goat, a tailpiece drawn by Normand, and cut by Duplat.—The names are signed,' said Lousteau.

'Well, and then?' said such of the audience as understood.

'That is the end of the chapter,' said Lousteau. 'The fact of this tailpiece changes my views as to the authorship. To have his book got up, under the Empire, with vignettes engraved on wood, the writer must have been a Councillor of State, or Madame Barthélemy-Hadot, or the late lamented Desforges, or Sewrin.'

'"Adolphe was silent."—Ah!' cried Bianchon, 'the Duchess must have been under thirty.'

'If there is no more, invent a conclusion,' said Madame de La Baudraye.

'You see,' said Lousteau, 'the waste sheet has been printed fair on one side only. In printers' lingo, it is a back sheet, or, to make it clearer, the other side which would have to be printed is covered all over with pages printed one above another, all experiments in making up. It would take too long to explain to you all the complications of a making-up sheet; but you may understand that it will show no more trace of the first twelve pages that were printed on it than you would in the least remember the first stroke of the bastinado if a Pasha had condemned you to have fifty on the soles of your feet.'

'I am quite bewildered,' said Madame Popinot-Chandier to Monsieur Gravier. 'I am vainly trying to connect the Councillor of State, the Cardinal, the key, and the making-up——'

'You have not the key to the jest,' said Monsieur Gravier. 'Well! no more have I, fair lady, if that can comfort you.'

'But here is another sheet,' said Bianchon, hunting on the table where the proofs had been laid.

'Capital!' said Lousteau, and it is complete and uninjured! It is signed IV; J, Second Edition. Ladies, the figure IV means that this is part of the fourth volume. The letter J, the tenth letter of the alphabet, shows that this is the tenth sheet. And it is perfectly clear to me, that in spite of any publisher's tricks, this romance, in four duodecimo volumes, had a great success, since it came to a second edition.—We will read on and find a clue to the mystery.'

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corridor; but finding that he was
pursued by the Duchess's people

'Oh, get along!'

'But,' said Madame de La Baudraye, 'some im-

portant events have taken place between your waste sheet and this page.'

'This complete sheet, Madame, this precious made-up sheet. But does the waste sheet in which the Duchess forgets her gloves in the arbour belong to the fourth volume? Well, Deuce take it—to proceed.

> Rinaldo saw no safer refuge than to make forthwith for the cellar where the treasures of the Bracciano family no doubt lay hid. As light of foot as Camilla sung by the Latin poet, he flew to the entrance to the Baths of Vespasian. The torchlight already flickered on the walls when Rinaldo, with the readiness bestowed on him by nature, discovered the door concealed in the stone work, and suddenly vanished. A hideous thought then flashed on Rinaldo's brain like lightning rending a cloud: He was imprisoned! He felt the

'Yes, this made-up sheet follows the waste sheet. The last page of the damaged sheet was 212, and this is 217. In fact, since Rinaldo, who in the earlier fragment stole the key of the Duchess's treasure by exchanging it for another very much like it, is now—on the made-up sheet—in the palace of the Dukes of Bracciano, the story seems to me to be advancing to a conclusion of some kind. I hope it is as clear to you as it becomes to me.—I understand that the festivities are over, the lovers have returned to the Bracciano Palace; it is night—one o'clock in the morning. Rinaldo will have a good time.'

'And Adolphe too!' said Président Boirouge, who was considered rather free in his speech.

'And the style!' said Bianchon.—'Rinaldo, who saw *no better refuge than to make for the cellar*.'

'It is quite clear that neither Maradan, nor Treuttel

and Wurtz, nor Doguereau, were the printers,' said Lousteau, 'for they employed correctors who revised the proofs, a luxury in which our publishers might very well indulge, and the writers of the present day would benefit greatly. Some scrubby pamphlet printer on the Quay——'

'What quay?' a lady asked of her neighbour. 'They spoke of baths——'

'Pray go on,' said Madame de la Baudraye.

'At any rate, it is not by a councillor,' said Bianchon.

'It may be by Madame Hadot,' replied Lousteau.

'What has Madame Hadot of La Charité to do with it?' the Présidente asked of her son.

'This Madame Hadot, my dear friend,' the hostess answered, 'was an authoress, who lived at the time of the Consulate.'

'What, did women write in the Emperor's time?' asked Madame Popinot-Chandier.

'What of Madame de Genlis and Madame de Staël?' cried the Public Prosecutor, piqued on Dinah's account by this remark.

'To be sure!'

'I beg you to go on,' said Madame de La Baudraye to Lousteau.

Lousteau went on, saying: 'Page 218.'

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wall with uneasy haste and gave a shriek of despair when he had vainly sought any trace of a secret spring. It was impossible to ignore the horrible truth. The door, cleverly constructed to serve the vengeful purposes of the Duchess, could not be opened from within. Rinaldo laid his cheek against the wall in various spots; nowhere could he feel the warmer air from the

passage. He had hoped he might find a crack that would show him where there was an opening in the wall, but nothing, nothing! The whole seemed to be of one block of marble.

Then he gave a hollow roar like that of a hyæna——

'Well, we fancied that the cry of the hyæna was a recent invention of our own!' said Lousteau, 'and it was already known to the literature of the Empire. It is even introduced with a certain skill in natural history, as we see in the word *hollow*.'

'Make no more comments, Monsieur,' said Madame de La Baudraye.

'There, you see!' cried Bianchon. 'Interest, the romantic demon, has you by the collar, as he had me a while ago.'

'Read on,' cried de Clagny, 'I understand.'

'What a coxcomb!' said the Presiding Judge in a whisper to his neighbour the Sous-préfet.

'He wants to please Madame de La Baudraye,' replied the new Sous-préfet.

'Well, then, I will read straight on,' said Lousteau solemnly.

Everybody listened in dead silence.

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A deep groan answered Rinaldo's cry, but in his alarm he took it for an echo, so weak and hollow was the sound. It could not proceed from any human breast.

'Santa Maria!' said the voice.

'If I stir from this spot I shall never find it again,' thought Rinaldo, when he had recovered his usual presence of mind. 'If I knock, I shall be discovered. What am I to do?'

'Who is here?' asked the voice.

'Hallo!' cried the brigand; 'do the toads here talk?'

'I am the Duke of Bracciano.

Whoever you may be, if you are not a follower of the Duchess's, in the name of all the saints, come towards me.'

'I should have to know where to find you, Monsieur le Duc,' said Rinaldo, with the insolence of a man who knows himself to be necessary.

'I can see you, my friend, for my eyes are accustomed to the darkness. Listen: walk straight forward—good; now turn to the left—come on—this way. There, we are close to each other.'

Rinaldo putting out his hands as a precaution, touched some iron bars.

'I am being deceived,' cried the bandit.

'No, you are touching my cage.

Sit down on a broken shaft of porphyry that is there.'

'How can the Duke of Bracciano be in a cage?' asked the brigand.

'My friend, I have been here for thirty months, standing up, unable to sit down—— But you, who are you?'

'I am Rinaldo, prince of the Campagna, the chief of four-and-twenty brave men whom the law describes as miscreants, whom all the ladies admire, and whom judges hang in obedience to an old habit.'

'God be praised! I am saved. An honest man would have been afraid, whereas I am sure of coming

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to an understanding with you,' cried the Duke. 'Oh, my worthy deliverer, you must be armed to the teeth.'

'*E verissimo*' (most true).

'Do you happen to have——'

'Yes; files, pincers—*Corpo di Bacco!* I came to borrow the treasures of the Bracciani on a long loan.'

'You will earn a handsome share of them very legitimately, my good Rinaldo, and we may possibly go man-hunting together——'

'You surprise me, Eccellenza!'

'Listen to me, Rinaldo. I will say nothing of the craving for vengeance that gnaws at my heart. I have been here for thirty months — you too are Italian — you

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will understand me! Alas, my friend, my fatigue and my horrible incarceration are as nothing in comparison with the rage that devours my soul. The Duchess of Bracciano is still one of the most beautiful women in Rome. I loved her well enough to be jealous——'

'You, her husband?'

'Yes, I was wrong, no doubt.'

'It is not the correct thing, to be sure,' said Rinaldo.

'My jealousy was roused by the Duchess's conduct,' the Duke went on. 'The event proved me right. A young Frenchman fell in love with Olympia, and she loved him. I had proofs of their reciprocal affection

'Pray excuse me, ladies,' said Lousteau, 'but I find it impossible to go on without remarking to you how

direct this Empire literature is, going to the point without any details, a characteristic, as it seems to me, of a primitive time. The literature of that period holds a place between the summaries of chapters in *Télémaque* and the categorical reports of a public office. It had ideas, but refrained from expressing them, it was so scornful! It was observant, but would not communicate its observations to any one, it was so miserly! Nobody but Fouché ever mentioned what he had observed. 'At that time,' to quote the words of one of the most imbecile critics in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 'literature was content with a clear sketch and the simple outline of all antique statues. It did not dance over its periods.'—I should think not! It had no periods to dance over. It had no words to make play with. You were plainly told that Lubin loved Toinette; that Toinette did not love Lubin; that Lubin killed Toinette and the police caught Lubin, who was put in prison, tried at the assizes, and guillotined.—A strong sketch, a clear outline! What a noble drama! Well, in these days the barbarians make words sparkle.

'Like hair in a frost,' said Monsieur de Clagny.

'So those are the airs you affect?'[1] retorted Lousteau.

'What can he mean?' asked Madame de Clagny, puzzled by this vile pun.

'I seem to be walking in the dark,' replied the Mayoress.

'The jest would be lost in an explanation,' remarked Gatien.

'Nowadays,' Lousteau went on, 'a novelist draws

[1] The rendering given above is only intended to link the various speeches into coherence; it has no resemblance with the French. In the original, 'Font chatoyer les *mots*.'

'Et quelquefois les *morts*,' dit Monsieur de Clagny.

'Ah! Lousteau! vous vous donnez de ces R-là' (airs-là).

Literally: 'And sometimes the dead.'—'Ah, are those the airs you assume?'—the play on the insertion of the letter R (*mots*, *morts*) has no meaning in English.

characters, and instead of a "simple outline," he unveils the human heart and gives you some interest either in Lubin or in Toinette.'

'For my part, I am alarmed at the progress of public knowledge in the matter of literature,' said Bianchon. 'Like the Russians, beaten by Charles XII., who at last learned the art of war, the reader has learned the art of writing. Formerly all that was expected of a romance was that it should be interesting. As to style, no one cared for that, not even the author; as to ideas—zero; as to local colour—*non est*. By degrees the reader has demanded style, interest, pathos, and complete information; he insists on the five literary senses—Invention, Style, Thought, Learning, and Feeling. Then came criticism commenting on everything. The critic, incapable of inventing anything but calumny, pronounces every work that proceeds from a not perfect brain to be deformed. Some magicians, as Walter Scott, for instance, having appeared in the world, who combined all the five literary senses, such writers as had but one—wit or learning, style or feeling—these cripples, these acephalous, maimed or purblind creatures—in a literary sense—have taken to shrieking that all is lost, and have preached a crusade against men who were spoiling the business, or have denounced their works.'

'The history of your last literary quarrel!' Dinah observed.

'For pity's sake, come back to the Duke of Bracciano,' cried Monsieur de Clagny.

To the despair of all the company, Lousteau went on with the made-up sheet.

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I then wished to make sure of my misfortune that I might be avenged under the protection of Providence and the Law. The Duchess guessed

my intentions. We were at war in our purposes before we fought with poison in our hands. We tried to tempt each other to such confidence as we could not feel, I to induce her to drink a potion, she to get possession of me. She was a woman, and she won the day; for women have a snare more than we men. I fell into it—I was happy; but I awoke next day in this iron cage. All through the day I bellowed with rage in the darkness

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of this cellar, over which is the Duchess's bedroom. At night an ingenious counterpoise acting as a lift raised me through the floor, and I saw the Duchess in her lover's arms. She threw me a piece of bread, my daily pittance.

Thus have I lived for thirty months! From this marble prison my cries can reach no ear. There is no chance for me. I will hope no more. Indeed, the Duchess's room is at the furthest end of the palace, and when I am carried up there none can hear my voice. Each time I see my wife she shows me the poison I had

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prepared for her and her lover. I crave it for myself, but she will not let me die; she gives me bread, and I eat it.

'I have done well to eat and live; I had not reckoned on robbers!'

'Yes, Eccellenza, when those fools the honest men are asleep, we are wide awake.'

'Oh, Rinaldo, all I possess shall be yours; we will share my treasure like

brothers; I would give you everything—even to my Duchy——'

'Eccellenza, procure from the Pope an absolution *in articulo mortis.* It would be of more use to me in my walk of life.

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'What you will. Only file through the bars of my cage and lend me your dagger. We have but little time, quick, quick! Oh, if my teeth were but files!—I have tried to eat through this iron.'

'Eccellenza,' said Rinaldo, 'I have already filed through one bar.'

'You are a god!'

'Your wife was at the fète given by the Princess Villaviciosa. She brought home her little Frenchman; she is drunk with love.—You have plenty of time.'

'Have you done?'

'Yes.'

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'Your dagger?' said the Duke eagerly to the brigand.'

'Here it is.'

'Good. I hear the clatter of the spring.'

'Do not forget me!' cried the robber, who knew what gratitude was.

'No more than my father,' cried the Duke.

'Good-bye!' said Rinaldo. 'Lord! How he flies up!' he added to himself as the Duke disappeared.—'No more than his father! If that is all he means to do for me.—And I had sworn a vow never to injure a woman!'

But let us leave the robber for a

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moment to his meditations and go up, like the Duke, to the rooms in the palace.

'Another tailpiece, a Cupid on a snail! And page 230 is blank,' said the journalist. 'Then there are two more blank pages before we come to the word it is such joy to write when one is unhappily so happy as to be a novelist—*Conclusion*!'

CONCLUSION

Never had the Duchess been more lovely; she came from her bath clothed like a goddess, and on seeing

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Adolphe voluptuously reclining on piles of cushions—

'You are beautiful,' said she.

'And so are you, Olympia!'

'And you still love me?'

'More and more,' said he.

'Ah, none but a Frenchman knows how to love!' cried the Duchess. 'Do you love me well to-night?'

'Yes.'

'Then come!'

And with an impulse of love and hate—whether it was that Cardinal Borborigano had reminded her of her husband, or that she felt unwonted passion to display, she pressed the springs and held out her arms.

'That is all,' said Lousteau, 'for the foreman has torn off the rest in wrapping up my proofs. But it is enough to show that the author was full of promise.'

'I cannot make head or tail of it,' said Gatien

Boirouge, who was the first to break the silence of the party from Sancerre.

'Nor I,' replied Monsieur Gravier.

'And yet it is a novel of the time of the Empire,' said Lousteau.

'By the way in which the brigand is made to speak,' said Monsieur Gravier, 'it is evident that the author knew nothing of Italy. Banditti do not allow themselves such graceful conceits.'

Madame Gorju came up to Bianchon, seeing him pensive, and with a glance towards her daughter Mademoiselle Euphémie Gorju, the owner of a fairly good fortune—'What a rhodomontade!' said she. 'The prescriptions you write are worth more than all that rubbish.'

The Mayoress had elaborately worked up this speech, which, in her opinion, showed strong judgment.

'Well, Madame, we must be lenient, we have but twenty pages out of a thousand,' said Bianchon, looking at Mademoiselle Gorju, whose figure threatened terrible things after the birth of her first child.

'Well, Monsieur de Clagny,' said Lousteau, 'we were talking yesterday of the forms of revenge invented by husbands. What do you say to those invented by wives?'

'I say,' replied the Public Prosecutor, 'that the romance is not by a Councillor of State, but by a woman. For extravagant inventions the imagination of women far outdoes that of men; witness *Frankenstein* by Mrs. Shelley, *Leone Leoni* by George Sand, the works of Anne Radcliffe, and the *Nouveau Prométhée* (New Prometheus) of Camille de Maupin.'

Dinah looked steadily at Monsieur de Clagny, making him feel, by an expression that gave him a chill, that in spite of the illustrious examples he had quoted, she regarded this as a reflection on *Paquita la Sevillane*.

'Pooh!' said little La Baudraye, 'the Duke of

Bracciano, whom his wife puts into a cage, and to whom she shows herself every night in the arms of her lover, will kill her—and do you call that revenge?—Our laws and our society are far more cruel.'

'How so?' asked Lousteau.

'Why, little La Baudraye is talking!' said Monsieur Boirouge to his wife.

'Why, the woman is left to live on a small allowance, the world turns its back on her, she has no more finery, and no respect paid her—the two things which, in my opinion, are the sum-total of woman,' said the little old man.

'But she has happiness!' said Madame de La Baudraye sententiously.

'No,' said the master of the house, lighting his candle to go to bed, 'for she has a lover!'

'For a man who thinks of nothing but his vine-stocks and poles, he has some spunk!' said Lousteau.

'Well, he must have something!' replied Bianchon.

Madame de La Baudraye, the only person who could hear Bianchon's remark, laughed so knowingly, and at the same time so bitterly, that the physician could guess the mystery of this woman's life; her premature wrinkles had been puzzling him all day.

But Dinah did not guess, on her part, the ominous prophecy contained for her in her husband's little speech, which her kind old Abbé Duret, if he had been alive, would not have failed to elucidate. Little La Baudraye had detected in Dinah's eyes, when she glanced at the journalist returning the ball of his jests, that swift and luminous flash of tenderness which gilds the gleam of a woman's eye when prudence is cast to the winds, and she is fairly carried away. Dinah paid no more heed to her husband's hint to her to observe the proprieties than Lousteau had done to Dinah's significant warnings on the day of his arrival.

Any other man than Bianchon would have been sur-

prised at Lousteau's immediate success; but he was so much the doctor, that he was not even nettled at Dinah's marked preference for the newspaper- rather than the prescription-writer! In fact, Dinah, herself famous, was naturally more alive to wit than to fame. Love generally prefers contrast to similitude. Everything was against the physician—his frankness, his simplicity, and his profession. And this is why: women who want to love—and Dinah wanted to love as much as to be loved—have an instinctive aversion for men who are devoted to an absorbing occupation; in spite of superiority, they are all women in the matter of encroachment. Lousteau, a poet and journalist, and a libertine with a veneer of misanthropy, had that tinsel of the intellect, and led the half-idle life that attracts women. The blunt good sense and keen insight of the really great man weighed upon Dinah, who would not confess her own smallness even to herself. She said in her mind—'The doctor is perhaps the better man, but I do not like him.'

Then, again, she reflected on his professional duties, wondering whether a woman could ever be anything but a *subject* to a medical man, who saw so many subjects in the course of a day's work. The first sentence of the aphorism written by Bianchon in her album was a medical observation striking so directly at woman, that Dinah could not fail to be hit by it. And then Bianchon was leaving on the morrow; his practice required his return. What woman, short of having Cupid's mythological dart in her heart, could decide in so short a time?

These little things—which lead to such great catastrophes—having been seen in a mass by Bianchon, he pronounced the verdict he had come to as to Madame de La Baudraye in a few words to Lousteau, to the journalist's great amazement.

While the two friends stood talking together, a storm was gathering in the Sancerre circle, who could not in

the least understand Lousteau's paraphrases and commentaries, and who vented it on their hostess. Far from finding in his talk the romance which the Public Prosecutor, the Sous-préfet, the Presiding Judge, and his deputy, Lebas, had discovered there—to say nothing of Monsieur de La Baudraye and Dinah—the ladies now gathered round the tea-table, took the matter as a practical joke, and accused the Muse of Sancerre of having a finger in it. They had all looked forward to a delightful evening, and had all strained in vain every faculty of their mind. Nothing makes provincial folks so angry as the notion of having been a laughing-stock for Paris folks.

Madame Piédefer left the table to say to her daughter, 'Do go and talk to the ladies; they are quite annoyed by your behaviour.'

Lousteau could not fail to see Dinah's great superiority over the best women of Sancerre; she was better dressed, her movements were graceful, her complexion was exquisitely white by candle-light—in short, she stood out against this background of old faces, shy and ill-dressed girls, like a queen in the midst of her court. Visions of Paris faded from his brain; Lousteau was accepting the provincial surroundings; and while he had too much imagination to remain unimpressed by the royal splendour of this château, the beautiful carvings, and the antique beauty of the rooms, he had also too much experience to overlook the value of the personality which completed this gem of the Renaissance. So by the time when the visitors from Sancerre had taken their leave one by one—for they had an hour's drive before them—when no one remained in the drawing-room but Monsieur de Clagny, Monsieur Lebas, Gatien, and Monsieur Gravier, who were all to sleep at Anzy—the journalist had already changed his mind about Dinah. His opinion had gone through the evolution that Madame de La Baudraye had so audaciously prophesied at their first meeting.

'Ah, what things they will say about us on the drive home!' cried the mistress of the house, as she returned to the drawing-room after seeing the President and the Présidente to their carriage with Madame and Mademoiselle Popinot-Chandier.

The rest of the evening had its pleasant side. In the intimacy of a small party each one brought to the conversation his contribution of epigrams on the figure the visitors from Sancerre had cut during Lousteau's comments on the paper wrapped round the proofs.

'My dear fellow,' said Bianchon to Lousteau as they went to bed—they had an enormous room with two beds in it—'you will be the happy man of this woman's choice—*née* Piédefer!'

'Do you think so?'

'It is quite natural. You are supposed here to have had many mistresses in Paris; and to a woman there is something indescribably inviting in a man whom other women favour—something attractive and fascinating; is it that she prides herself on being longer remembered than all the rest? that she appeals to his experience, as a sick man will pay more to a famous physician? or that she is flattered by the revival of a world-worn heart?'

'Vanity and the senses count for so much in love affairs,' said Lousteau, 'that there may be some truth in all those hypotheses. However, if I remain, it will be in consequence of the certificate of innocence, without ignorance, that you have given Dinah. She is handsome, is she not?'

'Love will make her beautiful,' said the doctor. 'And, after all, she will be a rich widow some day or other! And a child would secure her the life-interest in the Master of La Baudraye's fortune——'

'Why, it is quite an act of virtue to make love to her,' said Lousteau, rolling himself up in the bed-clothes, and to-morrow, with your help—yes, to-morrow, I—well, good-night.'

On the following day, Madame de La Baudraye, to whom her husband had six months since given a pair of horses, which he also used in the fields, and an old carriage that rattled on the road, decided that she would take Bianchon so far on his way as Cosne, where he would get into the Lyons diligence as it passed through. She also took her mother and Lousteau, but she intended to drop her mother at La Baudraye to go on to Cosne with the two Parisians, and return alone with Étienne. She was elegantly dressed, as the journalist at once perceived—bronze kid boots, grey silk stockings, a muslin dress, a green silk scarf with shaded fringe at the ends, and a pretty black lace bonnet with flowers in it. As to Lousteau, the wretch had assumed his war-paint—patent leather boots, trousers of English kerseymere with pleats in front, a very open waistcoat showing a particularly fine shirt and the black brocade waterfall of his handsomest cravat, and a very thin, very short black riding-coat.

Monsieur de Clagny and Monsieur Gravier looked at each other, feeling rather silly as they beheld the two Parisians in the carriage, while they, like two simpletons, were left standing at the foot of the steps. Monsieur de La Baudraye, who stood at the top waving his little hand in a little farewell to the doctor, could not forbear from smiling as he heard Monsieur de Clagny say to Monsieur Gravier—

'You should have escorted them on horseback.'

At this juncture Gatien, riding Monsieur de La Baudraye's quiet little mare, came out of the side road from the stables and joined the party in the chaise.

'Ah, good!' said the Receiver-General, 'the boy has mounted guard.'

'What a bore!' cried Dinah as she saw Gatien. 'In thirteen years—for I have been married nearly thirteen years—I have never had three hours' liberty.'

'Married, Madame?' said the journalist with a smile.

'You remind me of a saying of Michaud's—he was so witty! He was setting out for the Holy Land, and his friends were remonstrating with him, urging his age, and the perils of such an expedition. "And then," said one, "you are married."—"Married!" said he, "so little married."'

Even the rigid Madame Piédefer could not repress a smile.

'I should not be surprised to see Monsieur de Clagny mounted on my pony to complete the escort,' said Dinah.

'Well, if the Public Prosecutor does not pursue us, you can get rid of this little fellow at Sancerre. Bianchon must, of course, have left something behind on his table—the notes for the first lecture of his course—and you can ask Gatien to go back to Anzy to fetch it.'

This simple little plot put Madame de La Baudraye into high spirits. From the road between Anzy to Sancerre, a glorious landscape frequently comes into view, of the noble stretches of the Loire looking like a lake, and it was got over very pleasantly, for Dinah was happy in finding herself well understood. Love was discussed in theory, a subject allowing lovers *in petto* to take the measure, as it were, of each other's heart. The journalist took a tone of refined corruption to prove that love obeys no law, that the character of the lovers gives infinite variety to its incidents, that the circumstances of social life add to the multiplicity of its manifestations, that in love all is possible and true, and that any given woman, after resisting every temptation and the seductions of the most passionate lover, may be carried off her feet in the course of a few hours by a fancy, an internal whirlwind of which God alone would ever know the secret!

'Why,' said he, 'is not that the key to all the adventures we have talked over these three days past?'

For these three days, indeed, Dinah's lively imagina-

tion had been full of the most insidious romances, and the conversation of the two Parisians had affected the woman as the most mischievous reading might have done. Lousteau watched the effects of this clever manœuvre, to seize the moment when his prey, whose readiness to be caught was hidden under the abstraction caused by irresolution, should be quite dizzy.

Dinah wished to show La Baudraye to her two visitors, and the farce was duly played out of remembering the papers left by Bianchon in his room at Anzy. Gatien flew off at a gallop to obey his sovereign; Madame Piédefer went to do some shopping in Sancerre; and Dinah went on to Cosne alone with the two friends. Lousteau took his seat by the lady, Bianchon riding backwards. The two friends talked affectionately and with deep compassion for the fate of this choice nature so ill understood and in the midst of such vulgar surroundings. Bianchon served Lousteau well by making fun of the Public Prosecutor, of Monsieur Gravier, and of Gatien; there was a tone of such genuine contempt in his remarks, that Madame de La Baudraye dared not take the part of her adorers.

'I perfectly understand the position you have maintained,' said the doctor as they crossed the Loire. 'You were inaccessible excepting to that brain-love which often leads to heart-love; and not one of those men, it is very certain, is capable of disguising what, at an early stage of life, is disgusting to the senses in the eyes of a refined woman. To you, now, love is indispensable.'

'Indispensable!' cried Dinah, looking curiously at the doctor. 'Do you mean that you prescribe love to me?'

'If you go on living as you live now, in three years you will be hideous,' replied Bianchon in a dictatorial tone.

'Monsieur!' said Madame de La Baudraye, almost frightened.

'Forgive my friend,' said Lousteau, half jestingly. 'He is always the medical man, and to him love is merely a question of hygiene. But he is quite disinterested—it is for your sake only that he speaks—as is evident, since he is starting in an hour——'

At Cosne a little crowd gathered round the old repainted chaise, with the arms on the panels granted by Louis XIV. to the new La Baudraye. Gules, a pair of scales or; on a chief azure (colour on colour) three cross-crosslets argent. For supporters two greyhounds argent, collared azure, chained or. The ironical motto, *Deo sic patet fides et hominibus*, had been inflicted on the converted Calvinist by Hozier the satirical.

'Let us get out; they will come and find us,' said the Baroness, desiring her coachman to keep watch.

Dinah took Bianchon's arm, and the doctor set off by the banks of the Loire at so rapid a pace that the journalist had to linger behind. The physician had explained by a single wink that he meant to do Lousteau a good turn.

'You have been attracted by Étienne,' said Bianchon to Dinah; 'he has appealed strongly to your imagination; last night we were talking about you.—He loves you. But he is frivolous, and difficult to hold; his poverty compels him to live in Paris, while everything condemns you to live at Sancerre.—Take a lofty view of life. Make Lousteau your friend; do not ask too much of him; he will come three times a year to spend a few days with you, and you will owe to him your beauty, happiness, and fortune. Monsieur de La Baudraye may live to be a hundred; but he might die in a few days if he should leave off the flannel winding-sheet in which he swathes himself. So run no risks, be prudent both of you.—Say not a word—I have read your heart.'

Madame de La Baudraye was defenceless under this serried attack, and in the presence of a man who spoke at once as a doctor, a confessor, and confidential friend.

'Indeed!' said she. 'Can you suppose that any woman would care to compete with a journalist's mistresses?—Monsieur Lousteau strikes me as agreeable and witty; but he is *blasé*, etc., etc.——'

Dinah had turned back, and was obliged to check the flow of words by which she tried to disguise her intentions; for Étienne, who seemed to be studying progress in Cosne, was coming to meet them.

'Believe me,' said Bianchon, 'what he wants is to be truly loved; and if he alters his course of life, it will be to the benefit of his talent.'

Dinah's coachman hurried up breathlessly to say that the diligence had come in, and they walked on quickly, Madame de La Baudraye between the two men.

'Good-bye, my children!' said Bianchon, before they got into the town, 'you have my blessing!'

He released Madame de La Baudraye's hand from his arm, and allowed Lousteau to draw it into his, with a tender look, as he pressed it to his heart. What a difference to Dinah! Étienne's arm thrilled her deeply. Bianchon's had not stirred her in the least. She and the journalist exchanged one of those glowing looks that are more than an avowal.

'Only provincial women wear muslin gowns in these days,' thought Lousteau to himself, 'the only stuff which shows every crease. This woman, who has chosen me for her lover, will make a fuss over her frock! If she had but put on a foulard skirt, I should be happy.—What is the meaning of these difficulties——?'

While Lousteau was wondering whether Dinah had put on a muslin gown on purpose to protect herself by an insuperable obstacle, Bianchon, with the help of the coachman, was seeing his luggage piled on the diligence. Finally, he came to take leave of Dinah, who was excessively friendly with him.

'Go home, Madame la Baronne, leave me here—

Gatien will be coming,' he added in an undertone. 'It is getting late,' said he aloud. 'Good-bye!'

'Good-bye—great man!' cried Lousteau, shaking hands with Bianchon.

When the journalist and Madame de La Baudraye, side by side in the rickety old chaise, had recrossed the Loire, they both were unready to speak. In these circumstances, the first words that break the silence are full of terrible meaning.

'Do you know how much I love you?' said the journalist point blank.

Victory might gratify Lousteau, but defeat could cause him no grief. This indifference was the secret of his audacity. He took Madame de La Baudraye's hand as he spoke these decisive words, and pressed it in both his; but Dinah gently released it.

'Yes, I am as good as an actress or a *grisette*,' she said in a voice that trembled, though she spoke lightly. 'But can you suppose that a woman who, in spite of her absurdities, has some intelligence, will have reserved the best treasures of her heart for a man who will regard her merely as a transient pleasure?—I am not surprised to hear from your lips the words which so many men have said to me—but——'

The coachman turned round.

'Here comes Monsieur Gatien,' said he.

'I love you, I will have you, you shall be mine, for I have never felt for any woman the passion I have for you!' said Lousteau in her ear.

'In spite of my will, perhaps?' said she, with a smile.

'At least you must seem to have been assaulted to save my honour,' said the Parisian, to whom the fatal immaculateness of clean muslin suggested a ridiculous notion.

Before Gatien had reached the end of the bridge, the outrageous journalist had crumpled up Madame de La

Baudraye's muslin dress to such effect that she was absolutely not presentable.

'Oh, Monsieur!' she exclaimed in dignified reproof.

'You defied me,' said the Parisian.

But Gatien now rode up with the vehemence of a duped lover. To regain a little of Madame de La Baudraye's esteem, Lousteau did his best to hide the tumbled dress from Gatien's eyes by leaning out of the chaise to speak to him from Dinah's side.

'Go back to our inn,' said he, 'there is still time; the diligence does not start for half an hour. The papers are on the table of the room Bianchon was in; he wants them particularly, for he will be lost without his notes for the lecture.'

'Pray go, Gatien,' said Dinah to her young adorer, with an imperious glance. And the boy thus commanded turned his horse and was off with a loose rein.

'Go quickly to La Baudraye,' cried Lousteau to the coachman. 'Madame is not well—— Your mother only will know the secret of my trick,' added he, taking his seat by Dinah.

'You call such infamous conduct a trick?' cried Madame de La Baudraye, swallowing down a few tears that dried up with the fire of outraged pride.

She leaned back in the corner of the chaise, crossed her arms, and gazed out at the Loire and the landscape, at anything rather than at Lousteau. The journalist put on his most ingratiating tone, and talked till they reached La Baudraye, where Dinah fled indoors, trying not to be seen by any one. In her agitation she threw herself on a sofa and burst into tears.

'If I am an object of horror to you, of aversion or scorn, I will go,' said Lousteau, who had followed her. And he threw himself at her feet.

It was at this crisis that Madame Piédefer came in, saying to her daughter—

'What is the matter? What has happened?'

'Give your daughter another dress at once,' said the audacious Parisian in the prim old lady's ear.

Hearing the mad gallop of Gatien's horse, Madame de La Baudraye fled to her bedroom, followed by her mother.

'There are no papers at the inn,' said Gatien to Lousteau, who went out to meet him.

'And you found none at the Château d'Anzy either?' replied Lousteau.

'You have been making a fool of me,' said Gatien, in a cold set voice.

'Quite so,' replied Lousteau. 'Madame de La Baudraye was greatly annoyed by your choosing to follow her without being invited. Believe me, to bore a woman is a bad way of courting her. Dinah has played you a trick, and you have given her a laugh; it is more than any of you has done in these thirteen years past. You owe that success to Bianchon, for your cousin was the author of the Farce of "The Manuscript." —Will the horse get over it?' asked Lousteau with a laugh, while Gatien was wondering whether to be angry or not.

'The horse!' said Gatien.

At this moment Madame de La Baudraye came in, dressed in a velvet gown, and accompanied by her mother, who shot angry flashes at Lousteau. It would have been too rash for Dinah to seem cold or severe to Lousteau in Gatien's presence; and Étienne, taking advantage of this, offered his arm to the supposed Lucretia; however, she declined it.

'Do you mean to cast off a man who has vowed to live for you?' said he, walking close beside her. 'I shall stop at Sancerre and go home to-morrow.'

'Are you coming, Mamma?' said Madame de La Baudraye to Madame Piédefer, thus avoiding a reply to the direct challenge by which Lousteau was forcing her to a decision.

Lousteau handed the mother into the chaise, he helped Madame de La Baudraye by gently taking her arm, and he and Gatien took the front seat, leaving the saddle horse at La Baudraye.

'You have changed your gown,' said Gatien, blunderingly, to Dinah.

'Madame la Baronne was chilled by the cool air off the river,' replied Lousteau. 'Bianchon advised her to put on a warm dress.'

Dinah turned as red as a poppy, and Madame Piédefer assumed a stern expression.

'Poor Bianchon! he is on the road to Paris. A noble soul!' said Lousteau.

'Oh yes!' cried Madame de La Baudraye, 'he is high-minded, full of delicate feeling——'

'We were in such good spirits when we set out,' said Lousteau; 'now you are overdone, and you speak to me so bitterly—why? Are you not accustomed to being told how handsome and how clever you are? For my part, I say boldly, before Gatien, I give up Paris; I mean to stay at Sancerre and swell the number of your *cavalieri serventi*. I feel so young again in my native district; I have quite forgotten Paris and all its wickedness, and its bores, and its wearisome pleasures.—Yes, my life seems in a way purified.'

Dinah allowed Lousteau to talk without even looking at him; but at last there was a moment when this serpent's rhodomontade was really so inspired by the effort he made to affect passion in phrases and ideas of which the meaning, though hidden from Gatien, found a loud response in Dinah's heart, that she raised her eyes to his. This look seemed to crown Lousteau's joy; his wit flowed more freely, and at last he made Madame de La Baudraye laugh. When, under circumstances which so seriously compromise her pride, a woman has been made to laugh, she is finally committed.

As they drove in by the spacious gravelled forecourt, with its lawn in the middle, and the large vases filled with flowers which so well set off the façade of Anzy, the journalist was saying—

'When women love, they forgive everything, even our crimes; when they do not love, they cannot forgive anything—not even our virtues.—Do you forgive me,' he added in Madame de La Baudraye's ear, and pressing her arm to his heart with tender emphasis. And Dinah could not help smiling.

All through dinner, and for the rest of the evening, Étienne was in the most delightful spirits, inexhaustibly cheerful; but while thus giving vent to his intoxication, he now and then fell into the dreamy abstraction of a man who seems rapt in his own happiness.

After coffee had been served, Madame de La Baudraye and her mother left the men to wander about the gardens. Monsieur Gravier then remarked to Monsieur de Clagny—

'Did you observe that Madame de La Baudraye, after going out in a muslin gown came home in a velvet?'

'As she got into the carriage at Cosne, the muslin dress caught on a brass nail and was torn all the way down,' replied Lousteau.

'Oh!' exclaimed Gatien, stricken to the heart by hearing two such different explanations.

The journalist, who understood, took Gatien by the arm and pressed it as a hint to him to be silent. A few minutes later Étienne left Dinah's three adorers and took possession of little La Baudraye. Then Gatien was cross-questioned as to the events of the day. Monsieur Gravier and Monsieur de Clagny were dismayed to hear that on the return from Cosne Lousteau had been alone with Dinah, and even more so on hearing the two versions explaining the lady's change of dress. And the three discomfited gentlemen were in a very awkward position for the rest of the evening.

Next day each, on various business, was obliged to leave Anzy; Dinah remained with her mother, Lousteau, and her husband. The annoyance vented by the three victims gave rise to an organised rebellion in Sancerre. The surrender of the Muse of Le Berry, of the Nivernais, and of Morvan was the cause of a perfect hue and cry of slander, evil report, and various guesses in which the story of the muslin gown held a prominent place. No dress Dinah had ever worn had been so much commented on, or was half as interesting to the girls, who could not conceive what the connection might be, that made the married women laugh, between love and a muslin gown.

The Présidente Boirouge, furious at her son's discomfiture, forgot the praise she had lavished on the poem of *Paquita*, and fulminated terrific condemnation on the woman who could publish such a disgraceful work.

'The wretched woman commits every crime she writes about,' said she. 'Perhaps she will come to the same end as her heroine!'

Dinah's fate among the good folks of Sancerre was like that of Maréchal Soult in the opposition newspapers: as long as he is Minister he lost the battle of Toulouse; whenever he is out of the Government he won it! While she was virtuous, Dinah was a match for Camille de Maupin, a rival of the most famous women; but as soon as she was happy, she was an *unhappy creature.*

Monsieur de Clagny was her valiant champion; he went several times to the Château d'Anzy to acquire the right to contradict the rumours current as to the woman he still faithfully adored, even in her fall; and he maintained that she and Lousteau were engaged together on some great work. But the lawyer was laughed to scorn.

The month of October was lovely; autumn is the finest season in the valley of the Loire; but in 1836 it

was unusually glorious. Nature seemed to aid and abet Dinah, who, as Bianchon had predicted, gradually developed a heart-felt passion. In one month she was an altered woman. She was surprised to find in herself so many inert and dormant qualities, hitherto in abeyance. To her Lousteau seemed an angel; for heart-love, the crowning need of a great nature, had made a new woman of her. Dinah was alive! She had found an outlet for her powers, she saw undreamed-of vistas in the future—in short, she was happy, happy without alarms or hindrances. The vast castle, the gardens, the park, the forest, favoured love!

Lousteau found in Madame de La Baudraye an artlessness, nay, if you will, an innocence of mind which made her very original; there was much more of the unexpected and winning in her than in a girl. Lousteau was quite alive to a form of flattery which in most women is assumed, but which in Dinah was genuine; she really learned from him the ways of love; he really was the first to reign in her heart. And, indeed, he took the trouble to be exceedingly amiable.

Men, like women, have a stock in hand of recitatives, of *cantabile*, of *nocturnes*, airs and refrains—shall we say of recipes, although we speak of love—which each one believes to be exclusively his own. Men who have reached Lousteau's age try to distribute the 'movements' of this répertoire through the whole opera of a passion. Lousteau, regarding this adventure with Dinah as a mere temporary connection, was eager to stamp himself on her memory in indelible lines; and during that beautiful October he was prodigal of his most entrancing melodies and most elaborate *barcarolles*. In fact, he exhausted every resource of the stage management of love, to use an expression borrowed from the theatrical ctionary, and admirably descriptive of his manœuvres.

'If that woman ever forgets me!' he would some-

times say to himself as they returned together from a long walk in the woods, 'I will owe her no grudge—she will have found something better.'

When two beings have sung together all the duets of that enchanting score, and still love each other, it may be said that they love truly.

Lousteau, however, had not time to repeat himself, for he was to leave Anzy in the early days of November. His paper required his presence in Paris. Before breakfast, on the day before he was to leave, the journalist and Dinah saw the master of the house come in with an artist from Nevers, who restored carvings of all kinds.

'What are you going to do?' asked Lousteau. 'What is to be done to the château?'

'This is what I am going to do,' said the little man, leading Lousteau, the local artist, and Dinah out on the terrace.

He pointed out, on the front of the building, a shield supported by two sirens, not unlike that which may be seen on the arcade, now closed, through which there used to be a passage from the Quai des Tuileries to the courtyard of the old Louvre, and over which the words may still be seen, '*Bibliothèque du Cabinet du Roi.*' This shield bore the arms of the noble House of Uxelles, namely, Or and gules party per fess, with two lions or, dexter and sinister as supporters. Above, a knight's helm, mantled of the tincture of the shield, and surmounted by a ducal coronet. Motto, *Cy paroist*! A proud and sonorous device.

'I want to put my own coat-of-arms in the place of that of the Uxelles; and as they are repeated six times on the two fronts and the two wings, it is not a trifling affair.'

'Your arms, so new, and since 1830!' exclaimed Dinah.

'Have I not created an entail?'

'I could understand it if you had children,' said the journalist.

'Oh!' said the old man, 'Madame de La Baudraye is still young; there is no time lost.'

This illusion made Lousteau smile; he did not understand Monsieur de La Baudraye.

'There, Didine!' said he in Dinah's ear, 'what a waste of remorse!'

Dinah begged him to give her one day more, and the lovers parted after the manner of certain theatres, which give ten last performances of a piece that is paying. And how many promises they made! How many solemn pledges did not Dinah exact and the unblushing journalist give her!

Dinah, with the superiority of the Superior Woman, accompanied Lousteau, in the face of all the world, as far as Cosne, with her mother and little La Baudraye. When, ten days later, Madame de La Baudraye saw in her drawing-room at La Baudraye Monsieur de Clagny, Gatien, and Gravier, she found an opportunity of saying to each in turn—

'I owe it to Monsieur Lousteau that I discovered that I had not been loved for my own sake.'

And what noble speeches she uttered, on man, on the nature of his feelings, on the end of his base passions, and so forth. Of Dinah's three worshippers, Monsieur de Clagny only said to her—'I love you, come what may'—and Dinah accepted him as her confidant, lavished on him all the marks of friendship which women can devise for the Gurths who are ready thus to wear the collar of gilded slavery.

In Paris once more, Lousteau had, in a few weeks, lost the impression of the happy time he had spent at the Château d'Anzy. This is why: Lousteau lived by his pen.

In this century, especially since the triumph of the

bourgeoisie—the commonplace, money-saving citizen—who takes good care not to imitate Francis I. or Louis XIV.—to live by the pen is a form of penal servitude to which a galley-slave would prefer death. To live by the pen means to create—to create to-day, and to-morrow, and incessantly—or to seem to create; and the imitation costs as dear as the reality. So, besides his daily contribution to a newspaper, which was like the stone of Sisyphus, and which came every Monday, crashing down on to the feather of his pen, Étienne worked for three or four literary magazines. Still, do not be alarmed; he put no artistic conscientiousness into his work. This man of Sancerre had a facility, a carelessness, if you call it so, which ranked him with those writers who are mere scriveners, literary hacks. In Paris, in our day, hack-work cuts a man off from every pretension to a literary position. When he can do no more, or no longer cares for advancement, the man who can write becomes a journalist and a hack.

The life he leads is not unpleasing. Blue-stockings, beginners in every walk of life, actresses at the outset or the close of a career, publishers and authors, all make much of these writers of the ready pen. Lousteau, a thorough man about town, lived at scarcely any expense beyond paying his rent. He had boxes at all the theatres; the sale of the books he reviewed or left unreviewed paid for his gloves; and he would say to those authors who published at their own expense, 'I have your book always in my hands!' He took toll from vanity in the form of drawings or pictures. Every day had its engagements to dinner, every night its theatre, every morning was filled up with callers, visits, and lounging. His serial in the paper, two novels a year for weekly magazines, and his miscellaneous article were the tax he paid for this easy-going life. And yet, to reach this position, Étienne had struggled for ten years.

At the present time, known to the literary world,

liked for the good or the mischief he did with equally facile good-humour, he let himself float with the stream, never caring for the future. He ruled a little set of new-comers, he had friendships—or rather, habits of fifteen years' standing, and men with whom he supped, and dined, and indulged his wit. He earned from seven to eight hundred francs a month, a sum which he found quite insufficient for the prodigality peculiar to the impecunious. Indeed, Lousteau found himself now just as hard up as when, on first appearing in Paris, he had said to himself, 'If I had but five hundred francs a month, I should be rich!'

The cause of this phenomenon was as follows. Lousteau lived in the Rue des Martyrs in pretty ground-floor rooms with a garden, and splendidly furnished. When he settled there in 1833 he had come to an agreement with an upholsterer that kept his pocket-money low for a long time. These rooms were let for twelve hundred francs. The months of January, April, July, and October were, as he phrased it, his indigent months. The rent and the porter's account cleaned him out. Lousteau took no fewer hackney cabs, spent a hundred francs in breakfasts all the same, smoked thirty francs' worth of cigars, and could never refuse the mistress of a day a dinner or a new dress. He thus dipped so deeply into the fluctuating earnings of the following months, that he could no more find a hundred francs on his chimney-piece now, when he was making seven or eight hundred francs a month, than he could in 1822, when he was hardly getting two hundred.

Tired, sometimes, by the incessant vicissitudes of a literary life, and as much bored by amusement as a courtesan, Lousteau would get out of the tideway and sit on the bank, and say to one and another of his intimate allies—Nathan or Bixiou, as they sat smoking in his scrap of garden, looking out on an evergreen lawn as big as a dinner-table—

'What will be the end of us? White hairs are giving us respectful hints!'

'Lord! we shall marry when we choose to give as much thought to the matter as we give to a drama or a novel,' said Nathan.

'And Florine?' retorted Bixiou.

'Oh, we all have a Florine,' said Étienne, flinging away the end of his cigar and thinking of Madame Schontz.

Madame Schontz was a pretty enough woman to put a very high price on the interest on her beauty, while reserving absolute ownership for Lousteau, the man of her heart. Like all those women who got the name in Paris of *Lorettes*, from the Church of Notre-Dame de Lorette round about which they dwell, she lived in the Rue Fléchier, a stone's throw from Lousteau. This lady took a pride and delight in teasing her friends by boasting of having a Wit for her lover.

These details of Lousteau's life and fortune are indispensable, for this penury and this bohemian existence of a man to whom Parisian luxury had become a necessity, were fated to have a cruel influence on Dinah's life. Those to whom the bohemia of Paris is familiar will now understand how it was that, by the end of a fortnight, the journalist, up to his ears in the literary environment, could laugh about his Baroness with his friends and even with Madame Schontz. To such readers as regard such doings as utterly mean, it is almost useless to make excuses which they will not accept.

'What did you do at Sancerre?' asked Bixiou the first time he met Lousteau.

'I did good service to three worthy provincials—a Receiver-General of Taxes, a little cousin of his, and a Public Prosecutor, who for ten years had been dancing round and round one of the hundred "Tenth Muses" who adorn the Departments,' said he. 'But they had no more dared to touch her than we touch a decorated

cream at dessert till some strong-minded person has made a hole in it.'

'Poor boy!' said Bixiou. 'I said you had gone to Sancerre to turn Pegasus out to grass.'

'Your joke is as stupid as my Muse is handsome,' retorted Lousteau. 'Ask Bianchon, my dear fellow.'

'A Muse and Poet! A homœopathic cure then!' said Bixiou.

On the tenth day Lousteau received a letter with the Sancerre post-mark.

'Good! very good!' said Lousteau.

'Beloved friend, idol of my heart and soul——' twenty pages of it! all at one sitting, and dated midnight! She writes when she finds herself alone. Poor woman! Ah, ha! And a postscript—

'"I dare not ask you to write to me as I write, every day; still, I hope to have a few lines from my dear one every week, to relieve my mind."—What a pity to burn it all! is really well written,' said Lousteau to himself, as he threw the ten sheets of paper into the fire after having read them. That woman was born to reel off copy!'

Lousteau was not much afraid of Madame Schontz, who really loved him for himself; but he had supplanted a friend in the heart of a Marquise. This Marquise, a lady nowise coy, sometimes dropped in unexpectedly at his rooms in the evening, arriving veiled in a hackney coach; and she, as a literary woman, allowed herself to hunt through all his drawers.

A week later, Lousteau, who hardly remembered Dinah, was startled by another budget from Sancerre—eight leaves, sixteen pages! He heard a woman's step; he thought it announced a search from the Marquise, and tossed these rapturous and entrancing proofs of affection into the fire—unread!

'A woman's letter!' exclaimed Madame Schontz as she came in. 'The paper, the wax, are scented——'

'Here you are, sir,' said a porter from the coach office, setting down two huge hampers in the anteroom. 'Carriage paid. Please to sign my book.'

'Carriage paid!' cried Madame Schontz. 'It must have come from Sancerre.'

'Yes, Madame,' said the porter.

'Your Tenth Muse is a remarkably intelligent woman,' said the courtesan, opening one of the hampers, while Lousteau was writing his name. 'I like a Muse who understands housekeeping, and who can make game pies as well as blots. And, oh! what beautiful flowers!' she went on, opening the second hamper. 'Why, you could get none finer in Paris!—And here, and here! A hare, partridges, half a roebuck!—We will ask your friends and have a famous dinner, for Athalie has a special talent for dressing venison.'

Lousteau wrote to Dinah; but instead of writing from the heart, he was clever. The letter was all the more insidious; it was like one of Mirabeau's letters to Sophie. The style of a true lover is transparent. It is a clear stream which allows the bottom of the heart to be seen between two banks, bright with the trifles of existence, and covered with the flowers of the soul that blossom afresh every day, full of intoxicating beauty—but only for two beings. As soon as a love letter has any charm for a third reader, it is beyond doubt the product of the head, not of the heart. But a woman will always be beguiled; she always believes herself to be the determining cause of this flow of wit.

By the end of December Lousteau had ceased to read Dinah's letters; they lay in a heap in a drawer of his chest that was never locked, under his shirts, which they scented.

Then one of those chances came to Lousteau which such bohemians ought to clutch by every hair. In the middle of December, Madame Schontz, who took a real

interest in Étienne, sent to beg him to call on her one morning on business.

'My dear fellow, you have a chance of marrying.'

'I can marry very often, happily, my dear.'

'When I say marrying, I mean marrying well. You have no prejudices: I need not mince matters. This is the position: A young lady has got into trouble; her mother knows nothing of even a kiss. Her father is an honest notary, a man of honour; he has been wise enough to keep it dark. He wants to get his daughter married within a fortnight, and he will give her a fortune of a hundred and fifty thousand francs—for he has three other children; but—and it is not a bad idea—he will add a hundred thousand francs, under the rose, hand to hand, to cover the damages. They are an old family of Paris citizens, Rue des Lombards——'

'Well, then, why does not the lover marry her?'

'Dead.'

'What a Romance! Such things are nowhere to be heard of but in the Rue des Lombards.'

'But do not take it into your head that a jealous brother murdered the seducer. The young man died in the most commonplace way of a pleurisy caught as he came out of the theatre. A head-clerk and penniless, the man entrapped the daughter in order to marry into the business.—A judgment from heaven, I call it!'

'Where did you hear the story?'

'From Malaga; the notary is her *milord*.'

'What, Cardot, the son of that little old man in hair-powder, Florentine's first friend?'

'Just so. Malaga, whose "fancy" is a little tomtit of a fiddler of eighteen, cannot in conscience make such a boy marry the girl. Besides, she has no cause to do him an ill turn.—Indeed, Monsieur Cardot wants a man of thirty at least. Our notary, I feel sure, will be proud to have a famous man for his son-in-law. So just feel yourself all over.—You will pay your debts, you will

have twelve thousand francs a year, and be a father without any trouble on your part; what do you say to that to the good? And, after all, you only marry a very consolable widow. There is an income of fifty thousand francs in the house, and the value of the connection, so in due time you may look forward to not less than fifteen thousand francs a year more for your share, and you will enter a family holding a fine political position; Cardot is the brother-in-law of old Camusot, the député who lived so long with Fanny Beaupré.'

'Yes,' said Lousteau, 'old Camusot married little Daddy Cardot's eldest daughter, and they had high times together!'

'Well!' Madame Schontz went on, 'and Madame Cardot, the notary's wife, was a Chiffreville—manufacturers of chemical products, the aristocracy of these days! Potash, I tell you! Still, this is the unpleasant side of the matter. You will have a terrible mother-in-law, a woman capable of killing her daughter if she knew——! This Cardot woman is a bigot; she has lips like two faded narrow pink ribbons.

'A man of the town like you would never pass muster with that woman, who, in her well-meaning way, will spy out your bachelor life and know every fact of the past. However, Cardot says he means to exert his paternal authority. The poor man will be obliged to do the civil to his wife for some days; a woman made of wood, my dear fellow; Malaga, who has seen her, calls her a penitential scrubber. Cardot is a man of forty; he will be mayor of his district, and perhaps be elected deputy. He is prepared to give in lieu of the hundred thousand francs a nice little house in the Rue Saint-Lazare, with a forecourt and a garden, which cost him no more than sixty thousand at the time of the July overthrow; he would sell, and that would be an opportunity for you to go and come at the house, to see the daughter, and be civil to the mother.—And it would

give you a look of property in Madame Cardot's eyes. You would be housed like a prince in that little mansion. Then, by Camusot's interest, you may get an appointment as librarian to some public office where there is no library.—Well, and then if you invest your money in backing up a newspaper, you will get ten thousand francs a year on it, you can earn six, your librarianship will bring you in four.—Can you do better for yourself?

'If you were to marry a lamb without spot, it might be a light woman by the end of two years. What is the damage?—an anticipated dividend! It is quite the fashion.

'Take my word for it, you can do no better than come to dine with Malaga to-morrow. You will meet your father-in-law; he will know the secret has been let out—by Malaga, with whom he cannot be angry—and then you are master of the situation. As to your wife!—Why, her misconduct leaves you as free as a bachelor——'

'Your language is as blunt as a cannon ball.'

'I love you for your own sake, that is all—and I can reason. Well! why do you stand there like a wax image of Abd-el-Kader? There is nothing to meditate over. Marriage is heads or tails—well, you have tossed heads up.'

'You shall have my reply to-morrow,' said Lousteau.

'I would sooner have it at once; Malaga will write you up to-night.'

'Well, then, yes.'

Lousteau spent the evening in writing a long letter to the Marquise, giving her the reasons which compelled him to marry: his constant poverty, the torpor of his imagination, his white hairs, his moral and physical exhaustion—in short, four pages of arguments.—'As to Dinah, I will send her a circular announcing the marriage,' said he to himself. 'As Bixiou says, I have not my match for knowing how to dock the tail of a passion.'

Lousteau, who at first had been on some ceremony with himself, by next day had come to the point of dreading lest the marriage should not come off. He was pressingly civil to the notary.

'I knew Monsieur your father,' said he, 'at Florentine's, so I may well know you here, at Mademoiselle Turquet's. Like father, like son. A very good fellow and a philosopher, was little Daddy Cardot—excuse me, we always called him so. At that time, Florine, Florentine, Tullia, Coralie, and Mariette were the five fingers of your hand, so to speak—it is fifteen years ago. My follies, as you may suppose, are a thing of the past.—In those days it was pleasure that ran away with me; now I am ambitious; but, in our day, to get on at all a man must be free from debt, have a good income, a wife, and a family. If I pay taxes enough to qualify me, I may be a deputy yet, like any other man.'

Maître Cardot appreciated this profession of faith. Lousteau had laid himself out to please, and the notary liked him, feeling himself more at his ease, as may be easily imagined, with a man who had known his father's secrets than he would have been with another. On the following day Lousteau was introduced to the Cardot family as the purchaser of the house in the Rue Saint-Lazare, and three days later he dined there.

Cardot lived in an old house near the Place du Châtelet. In this house everything was 'good.' Economy covered every scrap of gilding with green gauze; all the furniture wore holland covers. Though it was impossible to feel a shade of uneasiness as to the wealth of the inhabitants, at the end of half an hour no one could suppress a yawn. Boredom perched in every nook; the curtains hung dolefully; the dining-room was like Harpagon's. Even if Lousteau had not known all about Malaga, he could have guessed that the notary's real life was spent elsewhere.

The journalist saw a tall, fair girl with blue eyes, at

once shy and languishing. The elder brother took a fancy to him; he was the fourth clerk in the office, but strongly attracted by the snares of literary fame, though destined to succeed his father. The younger sister was twelve years old. Lousteau, assuming a little Jesuitical air, played the Monarchist and Churchman for the benefit of the mother, was quiet, smooth, deliberate, and complimentary.

Within three weeks of their introduction, at his fourth dinner there, Félicie Cardot, who had been watching Lousteau out of the corner of her eye, carried him a cup of coffee where he stood in the window recess, and said in a low voice, with tears in her eyes—

'I will devote my whole life, Monsieur, to thanking you for your sacrifice in favour of a poor girl——'

Lousteau was touched; there was so much expression in her look, her accent, her attitude. 'She would make a good man happy,' thought he, pressing her hand in reply.

Madame Cardot looked upon her son-in-law as a man with a future before him; but, above all the fine qualities she ascribed to him, she was most delighted by his high tone of morals. Étienne, prompted by the wily notary, had pledged his word that he had no natural children, no tie that could endanger the happiness of her dear Félicie.

'You may perhaps think I go rather too far,' said the bigot to the journalist; 'but in giving such a jewel as my Félicie to any man, one must think of the future. I am not one of those mothers who want to be rid of their daughters. Monsieur Cardot hurries matters on, urges forward his daughter's marriage; he wishes it over. This is the only point on which we differ.—Though with a man like you, Monsieur, a literary man whose youth has been preserved by hard work from the moral shipwreck now so prevalent, we may feel quite safe; still, you would be the first to laugh at me if I looked for a

husband for my daughter with my eyes shut. I know you are not an innocent, and I should be very sorry for my Félicie if you were' (this was said in a whisper); 'but if you had any *liaison*—For instance, Monsieur, you have heard of Madame Roguin, the wife of a notary who, unhappily for our faculty, was sadly notorious. Madame Roguin has, ever since 1820, been kept by a banker——'

'Yes, du Tillet,' replied Étienne; but he bit his tongue as he recollected how rash it was to confess to an acquaintance with du Tillet.

'Yes.—Well, Monsieur, if you were a mother, would you not quake at the thought that Madame du Tillet's fate might be your child's? At her age, and *née* de Grandville! To have as a rival a woman of fifty and more. Sooner would I see my daughter dead than give her to a man who had such a connection with a married woman. A grisette, an actress, you take her and leave her.—There is no danger, in my opinion, from women of that stamp; love is their trade, they care for no one, one down and another to come on!—But a woman who has sinned against duty must hug her sin, her only excuse is constancy, if such a crime can ever have an excuse. At least, that is the view I hold of a respectable woman's fall, and that is what makes it so terrible——'

Instead of looking for the meaning of these speeches, Étienne made a jest of them at Malaga's, whither he went with his father-in-law elect; for the notary and the journalist were the best of friends.

Lousteau had already given himself the airs of a person of importance; his life at last was to have a purpose; he was in luck's way, and in a few days would be the owner of a delightful little house in the Rue Saint-Lazare; he was going to be married to a charming woman, he would have about twenty thousand francs a year, and could give the reins to his ambition; the young lady loved him, and he would be connected with

several respectable families. In short, he was in full sail on the blue waters of hope.

Madame Cardot had expressed a wish to see the prints for *Gil Blas*, one of the illustrated volumes which the French publishers were at that time bringing out, and Lousteau had taken the first numbers for the lady's inspection. The lawyer's wife had a scheme of her own, she had borrowed the book merely to return it; she wanted an excuse for walking in on her future son-in-law quite unexpectedly. The sight of those bachelor rooms, which her husband had described as charming, would tell her more, she thought, as to Lousteau's habits of life than any information she could pick up. Her sister-in-law, Madame Camusot, who knew nothing of the fateful secret, was terrified at such a marriage for her niece. Monsieur Camusot, a Councillor of the Supreme Court, old Camusot's son by his first marriage, had given his stepmother, who was Cardot's sister, a far from flattering account of the journalist.

Lousteau, clever as he was, did not think it strange that the wife of a rich notary should wish to inspect a volume costing fifteen francs before deciding on the purchase. Your clever man never condescends to study the middle-class, who escape his ken by this want of attention; and while he is making game of them, they are at leisure to throttle him.

So one day early in January 1837, Madame Cardot and her daughter took a hackney coach and went to the Rue des Martyrs to return the parts of *Gil Blas* to Félicie's betrothed, both delighted at the thought of seeing Lousteau's rooms. These domiciliary visitations are not unusual in the old citizen class. The porter at the front gate was not in; but his daughter, on being informed by the worthy lady that she was in the presence of Monsieur Lousteau's future mother-in-law and bride, handed over the key of the apartment—all

the more readily because Madame Cardot placed a gold piece in her hand.

It was by this time about noon, the hour at which the journalist would return from breakfasting at the Café Anglais. As he crossed the open space between the Church of Notre-Dame de Lorette and the Rue des Martyrs, Lousteau happened to look at a hired coach that was toiling up the Rue du Faubourg-Montmartre, and he fancied it was a dream when he saw the face of Dinah! He stood frozen to the spot when, on reaching his house, he beheld his Didine at the coach door.

'What has brought you here?' he inquired.—He adopted the familiar *tu*. The formality of *vous* was out of the question to a woman he must get rid of.

'Why, my love,' cried she, 'have you not read my letters?'

'Certainly I have,' said Lousteau.

'Well, then?'

'Well, then?'

'You are a father,' replied the country lady.

'Faugh!' cried he, disregarding the barbarity of such an exclamation. 'Well,' thought he to himself, 'she must be prepared for the blow.'

He signed to the coachman to wait, gave his hand to Madame de La Baudraye, and left the man with the chaise full of trunks, vowing that he would send away *illico*, as he said to himself, the woman and her luggage, back to the place she had come from.

'Monsieur, Monsieur,' called out little Pamela.

The child had some sense, and felt that three women must not be allowed to meet in a bachelor's rooms.

'Well, well!' said Lousteau, dragging Dinah along.

Pamela concluded that the lady must be some relation; however, she added—

'The key is in the door; your mother-in-law is there.'

In his agitation, while Madame de La Baudraye was

pouring out a flood of words, Étienne understood the child to say, 'Mother is there,' the only circumstance that suggested itself as possible, and he went in.

Félicie and her mother, who were by this time in the bedroom, crept into a corner on seeing Étienne enter with a woman.

'At last, Étienne, my dearest, I am yours for life!' cried Dinah, throwing her arms round his neck, and clasping him closely, while he took the key from the outside of the door. 'Life was a perpetual anguish to me in that house at Anzy. I could bear it no longer; and when the time came for me to proclaim my happiness—well, I had not the courage.—Here I am, your wife with your child! And you have not written to me; you have left me two months without a line.'

'But, Dinah, you place me in the greatest difficulty——'

'Do you love me?'

'How can I do otherwise than love you?—But would you not have been wiser to remain at Sancerre?—I am in the most abject poverty, and I fear to drag you into it——'

'Your misery will be paradise to me. I only ask to live here, never to go out——'

'Good God! that is all very fine in words, but——' Dinah sat down and melted into tears as she heard this speech, roughly spoken.

Lousteau could not resist this distress. He clasped the Baroness in his arms and kissed her.

'Do not cry, Didine!' said he; and, as he uttered the words, he saw in the mirror the figure of Madame Cardot, looking at him from the further end of the rooms. 'Come, Didine, go with Pamela and get your trunks unloaded,' said he in her ear. 'Go; do not cry; we will be happy!'

He led her to the door, and then came back to divert the storm.

'Monsieur,' said Madame Cardot, 'I congratulate myself on having resolved to see for myself the home of the man who was to have been my son-in-law. If my daughter were to die of it, she should never be the wife of such a man as you. You must devote yourself to making your Didine happy, Monsieur.'

And the virtuous lady walked out, followed by Félicie, who was crying too, for she had become accustomed to Étienne. The dreadful Madame Cardot got into her hackney-coach again, staring insolently at the hapless Dinah, in whose heart the sting still rankled of 'that is all very fine in words'; but who, nevertheless, like every woman in love, believed in the murmured, 'Do not cry, Didine!'

Lousteau, who was not lacking in the sort of decision which grows out of the vicissitudes of a storm-tossed life, reflected thus:—

'Didine is high-minded; when once she knows of my proposed marriage, she will sacrifice herself for my future prospects, and I know how I can manage to let her know.' Delighted at having hit on a trick of which the success seemed certain, he danced round to a familiar tune—

'*Larifla*, *fla*, *fla!*—And Didine once out of the way,' he went on, talking to himself, 'I will treat Maman Cardot to a call and a novelette: I have seduced her Félicie at Saint-Eustache—Félicie, guilty through passion, bears in her bosom the pledge of our affection—and *larifla*, *fla*, *fla!* The father cannot give me the lie, *fla*, *fla*—no, nor the girl—*larifla!*—*Ergo*, the notary, his wife, and his daughter are caught, nabbed——'

And, to her great amazement, Dinah discovered Étienne performing a prohibited dance.

'Your arrival and our happiness have turned my head with joy,' said he, to explain this crazy mood.

'And I had fancied you had ceased to love me!' exclaimed the poor woman, dropping the handbag she

was carrying, and weeping with joy as she sank into a chair.

'Make yourself at home, my darling,' said Étienne, laughing in his sleeve; 'I must write two lines to excuse myself from a bachelor party, for I mean to devote myself to you. Give your orders; you are at home.'

Étienne wrote to Bixiou:—

'My dear Boy,—My Baroness has dropped into my arms, and will be fatal to my marriage unless we perform one of the most familiar stratagems of the thousand and one comedies at the Gymnase. I rely on you to come here, like one of Molière's old men, to scold your nephew Léandre for his folly, while the Tenth Muse lies hidden in my bedroom; you must work on her feelings; strike hard, be brutal, offensive. I, you understand, shall express my blind devotion, and shall seem to be deaf, so that you may have to shout at me.

'Come, if you can, at seven o'clock.

'Yours,

'É. Lousteau.'

Having sent this letter by a commissionaire to the man who, in all Paris, most delighted in such practical jokes—in the slang of artists, a '*charge*'—Lousteau made a great show of settling the Muse of Sancerre in his apartment. He busied himself in arranging the luggage she had brought, and informed her as to the persons and ways of the house with such perfect good faith, and a glee which overflowed in kind words and caresses, that Dinah believed herself the best-beloved woman in the world. These rooms, where everything bore the stamp of fashion, pleased her far better than her old château.

Pamela Migeon, the intelligent damsel of fourteen, was questioned by the journalist as to whether she would like to be waiting-maid to the imposing Baroness.

Pamela, perfectly enchanted, entered on her duties at once, by going off to order dinner from a restaurant on the boulevard. Dinah was able to judge of the extreme poverty that lay hidden under the purely superficial elegance of this bachelor home when she found none of the necessaries of life. As she took possession of the closets and drawers, she indulged in the fondest dreams; she would alter Étienne's habits, she would make him home-keeping, she would fill his cup of domestic happiness.

The novelty of the position hid its disastrous side; Dinah regarded reciprocated love as the absolution of her sin; she did not yet look beyond the walls of these rooms. Pamela, whose wits were as sharp as those of a *lorette*, went straight to Madame Schontz to beg the loan of some plate, telling her what had happened to Lousteau. After making the child welcome to all she had, Madame Schontz went off to her friend Malaga, that Cardot might be warned of the catastrophe that had befallen his future son-in-law.

The journalist, not in the least uneasy about the crisis as affecting his marriage, was more and more charming to the lady from the provinces. The dinner was the occasion of the delightful child's-play of lovers set at liberty, and happy to be free. When they had had their coffee, and Lousteau was sitting in front of the fire, Dinah on his knee, Pamela ran in with a scared face.

'Here is Monsieur Bixiou!' said she.

'Go into the bedroom,' said the journalist to his mistress; 'I will soon get rid of him. He is one of my most intimate friends, and I shall have to explain to him my new start in life.'

'Oh, ho! dinner for two, and a blue velvet bonnet!' cried Bixiou. 'I am off.—Ah! that is what comes of marrying—one must go through some partings. How rich one feels when one begins to move one's sticks, heh?'

'Who talks of marrying?' said Lousteau.

'What! are you not going to be married, then?' cried Bixiou.

'No!'

'No? My word, what next? Are you making a fool of yourself, if you please?—What!—You, who, by the mercy of Heaven, have come across twenty thousand francs a year, and a house, and a wife connected with all the first families of the better middle class—a wife, in short, out of the Rue des Lombards——'

'That will do, Bixiou, enough; it is at an end. Be off!'

'Be off? I have a friend's privileges, and I shall take every advantage of them.—What has come over you?'

'What has "come over" me is my lady from Sancerre. She is a mother, and we are going to live together happily to the end of our days.—You would have heard it to-morrow, so you may as well be told it now.'

'Many chimney-pots are falling on my head, as Arnal says. But if this woman really loves you, my dear fellow, she will go back to the place she came from. Did any provincial woman ever yet find her sea-legs in Paris? She will wound all your vanities. Have you forgotten what a provincial is? She will bore you as much when she is happy as when she is sad; she will have as great a talent for escaping grace as a Parisian has in inventing it.

'Lousteau, listen to me. That a passion should lead you to forget to some extent the times in which we live, is conceivable; but I, my dear fellow, have not the mythological bandage over my eyes.—Well, then, consider your position. For fifteen years you have been tossing in the literary world; you are no longer young, you have padded the hoof till your soles are worn through!—Yes, my boy, you turn your socks under like a street urchin to hide the holes, so that the legs

cover the heels! In short, the joke is too stale. Your excuses are more familiar than a patent medicine——'

'I may say to you, like the Regent to Cardinal Dubois, "That is kicking enough!"' said Lousteau, laughing.

'Oh, venerable young man,' replied Bixiou, 'the iron has touched the sore to the quick. You are worn out, aren't you? Well, then; in the heyday of youth, under the pressure of penury, what have you done? You are not in the front rank, and you have not a thousand francs of your own. That is the sum-total of the situation. Can you, in the decline of your powers, support a family by your pen, when your wife, if she is an honest woman, will not have at her command the resources of the woman of the streets, who can extract her thousand-franc note from the depths where milord keeps it safe? You are rushing into the lowest depths of the social theatre.

'And this is only the financial side. Now, consider the political position. We are struggling in an essentially *bourgeois* age, in which honour, virtue, high-mindedness, talent, learning—genius, in short—is summed up in paying your way, owing nobody anything, and conducting your affairs with judgment. Be steady, be respectable, have a wife and children, pay your rent and taxes, serve in the National Guard, and be on the same pattern as all the men of your company—then you may indulge in the loftiest pretensions, rise to the Ministry!—And you have the best chances possible, since you are no Montmorency. You were preparing to fulfil all the conditions insisted on for turning out a political personage, you are capable of every mean trick that is necessary in office, even of pretending to be commonplace—you would have acted it to the life. And just for a woman, who will leave you in the lurch—the end of every eternal passion—in three, five, or seven years—after exhausting your last physical and intellectual

powers, you turn your back on the sacred Hearth, on the Rue des Lombards, on a political career, on thirty thousand francs per annum, on respectability and respect!—Ought that to be the end of a man who has done with illusions?

'If you had kept a pot-boiling for some actress who gave you your fun for it—well; that is what you may call a cabinet matter. But to live with another man's wife? It is a draft at sight on disaster; it is bolting the bitter pills of vice with none of the gilding.'

'That will do. One word answers it all; I love Madame de La Baudraye, and prefer her to every fortune, to every position the world can offer.—I may have been carried away by a gust of ambition, but everything must give way to the joy of being a father.'

'Ah, ha! you have a fancy for paternity? But, wretched man, we are the fathers only of our legitimate children. What is a brat that does not bear your name? The last chapter of the romance.—Your child will be taken from you! We have seen that story in twenty plays these ten years past.

'Society, my dear boy, will drop upon you sooner or later. Read *Adolphe* once more.—Dear me! I fancy I can see you when you and she are used to each other; —I see you dejected, hang-dog, bereft of position and fortune, and fighting like the shareholders of a bogus company when they are tricked by a director!—Your director is happiness.'

'Say no more, Bixiou.'

'But I have only just begun,' said Bixiou. 'Listen, my dear boy. Marriage has been out of favour for some time past; but, apart from the advantages it offers in being the only recognised way of certifying heredity, as it affords a good-looking young man, though penniless, the opportunity of making his fortune in two months, it survives in spite of disadvantages. And there is not the man living who would not repent, sooner or later, of

having, by his own fault, lost the chance of marrying thirty thousand francs a year.'

'You won't understand me,' cried Lousteau, in a voice of exasperation. 'Go away—she is there——'

'I beg your pardon; why did you not tell me sooner? —You are of age, and so is she,' he added in a lower voice, but loud enough to be heard by Dinah. 'She will make you repent bitterly of your happiness!——'

'If it is a folly, I intend to commit it.—Good-bye.'

'A man gone overboard!' cried Bixiou.

'Devil take those friends who think they have a right to preach to you,' said Lousteau, opening the door of the bedroom, where he found Madame de La Baudraye sunk in an armchair and dabbing her eyes with an embroidered handkerchief.

'Oh, why did I come here?' sobbed she. 'Good Heavens, why indeed?—Étienne, I am not so provincial as you think me.—You are making a fool of me.'

'Darling angel,' replied Lousteau, taking Dinah in his arms, lifting her from her chair, and dragging her half dead into the drawing-room, 'we have both pledged our future, it is sacrifice for sacrifice. While I was loving you at Sancerre, they were engaging me to be married here, but I refused.—Oh! I was extremely distressed——'

'I am going,' cried Dinah, starting wildly to her feet and turning to the door.

'You will stay here, my Didine. All is at an end. And is this fortune so lightly earned after all? Must I not marry a gawky, tow-haired creature, with a red nose, the daughter of a notary, and saddle myself with a stepmother who could give Madame de Piédefer points on the score of bigotry——'

Pamela flew in, and whispered in Lousteau's ear—

'Madame Schontz!'

Lousteau rose, leaving Dinah on the sofa, and went out.

'It is all over with you, my dear,' said the woman.

'Cardot does not mean to quarrel with his wife for the sake of a son-in-law. The lady made a scene—something like a scene, I can tell you! So, to conclude, the head-clerk, who was the late head-clerk's deputy for two years, agrees to take the girl with the business.'

'Mean wretch!' exclaimed Lousteau. 'What! in two hours he has made up his mind?'

'Bless me, that is simple enough. The rascal, who knew all the dead man's little secrets, guessed what a fix his master was in from overhearing a few words of the squabble with Madame Cardot. The notary relies on your honour and good feeling, for the affair is settled. The clerk, whose conduct has been admirable, went so far as to attend mass! A finished hypocrite, I say—just suits the mamma. You and Cardot will still be friends. He is to be a director in an immense financial concern, and he may be of use to you.—So you have been waked from a sweet dream.'

'I have lost a fortune, a wife, and——'

'And a mistress,' said Madame Schontz, smiling. 'Here you are, more than married; you will be insufferable, you will be always wanting to get home, there will be nothing loose about you, neither your clothes nor your habits. And, after all, my Arthur does things in style. I will be faithful to him and cut Malaga's acquaintance.

'Let me peep at her through the door—your Sancerre Muse,' she went on. 'Is there no finer bird than that to be found in the desert?' she exclaimed. 'You are cheated! She is dignified, lean, lachrymose; she only needs Lady Dudley's turban!'

'What is it now?' asked Madame de La Baudraye, who had heard the rustle of a silk dress and the murmur of a woman's voice.

'It is, my darling, that we are now indissolubly united.—I have just had an answer to the letter you saw me write, which was to break off my marriage——'

'So that was the party which you gave up?'

'Yes.'

'Oh, I will be more than your wife—I am your slave, I give you my life,' said the poor deluded creature. 'I did not believe I could love you more than I did!—Now I shall not be a mere incident, but your whole life?'

'Yes, my beautiful, my generous Didine.'

'Swear to me,' said she, 'that only death shall divide us.'

Lousteau was ready to sweeten his vows with the most fascinating prettinesses. And this was why. Between the door of the apartment where he had taken the lorette's farewell kiss, and that of the drawing-room, where the Muse was reclining, bewildered by such a succession of shocks, Lousteau had remembered little de La Baudraye's precarious health, his fine fortune, and Bianchon's remark about Dinah, 'She will be a rich widow!' and he said to himself, 'I would a hundred times rather have Madame de La Baudraye for a wife than Félicie!'

His plan of action was quickly decided on; he determined to play the farce of passion once more, and to perfection.

His mean self-interest and his false vehemence of passion had disastrous results. Madame de La Baudraye, when she set out from Sancerre for Paris, had intended to live in rooms of her own quite near to Lousteau; but the proofs of devotion her lover had given her by giving up such brilliant prospects, and yet more the perfect happiness of the first days of their illicit union, kept her from mentioning such a parting. The second day was to be—and indeed was—a high festival, in which such a suggestion proposed to 'her angel' would have been a discordant note.

Lousteau, on his part, anxious to make Dinah feel herself dependent on him, kept her in a state of constant

intoxication by incessant amusement. These circumstances hindered two persons so clever as these were from avoiding the slough into which they fell—that of a life in common, a piece of folly of which, unfortunately, many instances may be seen in Paris in literary circles.

And thus was the whole programme played out of a provincial amour, so satirically described by Lousteau to Madame de La Baudraye—a fact which neither he nor she remembered. Passion is born a deaf-mute.

This winter in Paris was to Madame de La Baudraye all that the month of October had been at Sancerre. Étienne, to initiate 'his wife' into Paris life, varied this honeymoon by evenings at the play, where Dinah would only go to the stage box. At first Madame de La Baudraye preserved some remnants of her countrified modesty; she was afraid of being seen; she hid her happiness. She would say—

'Monsieur de Clagny or Monsieur Gravier may have followed me to Paris.' She was afraid of Sancerre even in Paris.

Lousteau, who was excessively vain, educated Dinah, took her to the best dressmakers, and pointed out to her the most fashionable women, advising her to take them as models for imitation. And Madame de La Baudraye's provincial appearance was soon a thing of the past. Lousteau, when his friends met him, was congratulated on his conquest.

All through that season Étienne wrote little and got very much into debt, though Dinah, who was proud, bought all her clothes out of her savings, and fancied she had not been the smallest expense to her beloved. By the end of three months Dinah was acclimatised; she had revelled in the music at the Italian opera; she knew the pieces 'on' at all theatres, and the actors and jests of the day; she had become inured to this life of perpetual

excitement, this rapid torrent in which everything is forgotten. She no longer craned her neck or stood with her nose in the air, like an image of Amazement, at the constant surprises that Paris has for a stranger. She had learned to breathe that witty, vitalising, teeming atmosphere where clever people feel themselves in their element, and which they can no longer bear to quit.

One morning, as she read the papers, for Lousteau had them all, two lines carried her back to Sancerre and the past, two lines that seemed not unfamiliar—as follows:—

'Monsieur le Baron de Clagny, Public Prosecutor to the Criminal Court at Sancerre, has been appointed Deputy Public Prosecutor to the Supreme Court in Paris.'

'How well that worthy lawyer loves you!' said the journalist, smiling.

'Poor man!' said she. 'What did I tell you? He is following me.'

Étienne and Dinah were just then at the most dazzling and fervid stage of a passion when each is perfectly accustomed to the other, and yet love has not lost its freshness and relish. The lovers know each other well, but all is not yet understood; they have not been a second time to the same secret haunts of the soul; they have not studied each other till they know, as they must later, the very thought, word, and gesture that responds to every event, the greatest and the smallest. Enchantment reigns; there are no collisions, no differences of opinion, no cold looks. Their two souls are always on the same side. And Dinah would speak the magical words, emphasised by the yet more magical expression and looks which every woman can use under such circumstances.

'When you cease to love me, kill me.—If you should cease to love me, I believe I could kill you first and myself after.'

To this sweet exaggeration, Lousteau would reply—

'All I ask of God is to see you as constant as I shall be. It is you who will desert me!'

'My love is supreme.'

'Supreme,' echoed Lousteau. 'Come, now? Suppose I am dragged away to a bachelor party, and find there one of my former mistresses, and she makes fun of me; I, out of vanity, behave as if I were free, and do not come in here till next morning—would you still love me?'

'A woman is only sure of being loved when she is preferred; and if you came back to me, if—— Oh! you make me understand what the happiness would be of forgiving the man I adore.'

'Well, then, I am truly loved for the first time in my life!' cried Lousteau.

'At last you understand that!' said she.

Lousteau proposed that they should each write a letter setting forth the reasons which would compel them to end by suicide. Once in possession of such a document, each might kill the other without danger in case of infidelity. But in spite of mutual promises, neither wrote the letter.

The journalist, happy for the moment, promised himself that he would deceive Dinah when he should be tired of her, and would sacrifice everything to the requirements of that deception. To him Madame de La Baudraye was a fortune in herself. At the same time, he felt the yoke.

Dinah, by consenting to this union, showed a generous mind and the power derived from self-respect. In this absolute intimacy, in which both lovers put off their mask, the young woman never abdicated her modesty, her masculine rectitude, and the strength peculiar to ambitious souls, which formed the basis of her character. Lousteau involuntarily held her in high esteem. As a Parisian, Dinah was superior to the most fascinating courtesan; she could be as amusing and as

witty as Malaga; but her extensive information, her habits of mind, her vast reading enabled her to generalise her wit, while the Florines and the Schontzes exerted theirs over a very narrow circle.

'There is in Dinah,' said Étienne to Bixiou, 'the stuff to make both a Ninon and a de Staël.'

'A woman who combines an encyclopædia and a seraglio is very dangerous,' replied the mocking spirit.

When the expected infant became a visible fact, Madame de La Baudraye would be seen no more; but before shutting herself up, never to go out unless into the country, she was bent on being present at the first performance of a play by Nathan. This literary solemnity occupied the minds of the two thousand persons who regard themselves as constituting 'all Paris.' Dinah, who had never been at a first night's performance, was full of very natural curiosity. She had by this time arrived at such a pitch of affection for Lousteau that she gloried in her misconduct; she exerted a sort of savage strength to defy the world; she was determined to look it in the face without turning her head aside.

She dressed herself to perfection, in a style suited to her delicate looks and the sickly whiteness of her face. Her pallid complexion gave her an expression of refinement, and her black hair in smooth bands enhanced her pallor. Her brilliant grey eyes looked finer than ever, set in dark rings. But a terribly distressing incident awaited her. By a very simple chance, the box given to the journalist, on the first tier, was next to that which Anna Grossetête had taken. The two intimate friends did not even bow; neither chose to acknowledge the other. At the end of the first act Lousteau left his seat, abandoning Dinah to the fire of eyes, the glare of opera-glasses; while the Baronne de Fontaine and the Comtesse Marie de Vandenesse, who accompanied her,

received some of the most distinguished men of fashion.

Dinah's solitude was all the more distressing because she had not the art of putting a good face on the matter by examining the company through her opera-glass. In vain did she try to assume a dignified and thoughtful attitude, and fix her eyes on vacancy; she was over-poweringly conscious of being the object of general attention; she could not disguise her discomfort, and lapsed a little into provincialism, displaying her handkerchief and making involuntary movements of which she had almost cured herself. At last, between the second and third acts, a man had himself admitted to Dinah's box! It was Monsieur de Clagny.

'I am happy to see you, to tell you how much I am pleased by your promotion,' said she.

'Oh! Madame, for whom should I come to Paris——?'

'What!' said she. 'Have I anything to do with your appointment?'

'Everything,' said he. 'Since you left Sancerre, it had become intolerable to me; I was dying——'

'Your sincere friendship does me good,' replied she, holding out her hand. 'I am in a position to make much of my true friends; I now know their value.—I feared I must have lost your esteem, but the proof you have given me by this visit touches me more deeply than your ten years' attachment.'

'You are an object of curiosity to the whole house,' said the lawyer. 'Oh! my dear, is this a part for you to be playing? Could you not be happy and yet remain honoured?—I have just heard that you are Monsieur Étienne Lousteau's mistress, that you live together as man and wife!—You have broken for ever with society; even if you should some day marry your lover, the time will come when you will feel the want of the respectability you now despise. Ought you not to be



in a home of your own with your mother, who loves you well enough to protect you with her ægis?—Appearances at least would be saved.'

'I am in the wrong to have come here,' replied she, 'that is all.—I have bid farewell to all the advantages which the world confers on women who know how to reconcile happiness and the proprieties. My abnegation is so complete that I only wish I could clear a vast space about me to make a desert of my love, full of God, of *him*, and of myself.—We have made too many sacrifices on both sides not to be united—united by disgrace if you will, but indissolubly one. I am happy; so happy that I can love freely, my friend, and confide in you more than of old—for I need a friend.'

The lawyer was magnanimous, nay, truly great. To this declaration, in which Dinah's soul thrilled, he replied in heart-rending tones—

'I wanted to go to see you, to be sure that you were loved: I shall now be easy and no longer alarmed as to your future.—But will your lover appreciate the magnitude of your sacrifice; is there any gratitude in his affection?'

'Come to the Rue des Martyrs and you will see!'

'Yes, I will call,' he replied. 'I have already passed your door without daring to inquire for you.—You do not yet know the literary world. There are glorious exceptions, no doubt; but these men of letters drag terrible evils in their train; among these I account publicity as one of the greatest, for it blights everything. A woman may commit herself with——'

'With a Public Prosecutor?' the Baronne put in with a smile.

'Well!—and then after a rupture there is still something to fall back on; the world has known nothing. But with a more or less famous man the public is thoroughly informed. Why, look there! What an example you have close at hand! You are sitting back

to back with the Comtesse Marie Vandenesse, who was within an ace of committing the utmost folly for a more celebrated man than Lousteau—for Nathan—and now they do not even recognise each other. After going to the very edge of the precipice, the Countess was saved, no one knows how ; she neither left her husband nor her house ; but as a famous man was concerned, she was the talk of the town for a whole winter. But for her husband's great fortune, great name, and high position, but for the admirable management of that true statesman—whose conduct to his wife, they say, was perfect—she would have been ruined ; in her position no other woman would have remained respected as she is.'

'And how was Sancerre when you came away ?' asked Madame de La Baudraye, to change the subject.

'Monsieur de La Baudraye announced that your expected confinement after so many years made it necessary that it should take place in Paris, and that he had insisted on your going to be attended by the first physicians,' replied Monsieur de Clagny, guessing what it was that Dinah most wanted to know. 'And so, in spite of the commotion to which your departure gave rise, you still have your legal status.'

'Why !' she exclaimed, 'can Monsieur de La Baudraye still hope——'

'Your husband, Madame, did what he always does—made a little calculation.'

The lawyer left the box when the journalist returned, bowing with dignity.

'You are a greater hit than the piece,' said Étienne to Dinah.

This brief triumph brought greater happiness to the poor woman than she had ever known in the whole of her provincial existence ; still, as they left the theatre she was very grave.

'What ails you, my Didine ?' asked Lousteau.

'I am wondering how a woman succeeds in conquering the world?'

'There are two ways. One is by being Madame de Staël, the other is by having two hundred thousand francs a year.'

'Society,' said she, 'asserts its hold on us by appealing to our vanity, our love of appearances.—Pooh! We will be philosophers!'

That evening was the last gleam of the delusive well-being in which Madame de La Baudraye had lived since coming to Paris. Three days later she observed a cloud on Lousteau's brow as he walked round the little garden-plot smoking a cigar. This woman, who had acquired from her husband the habit and the pleasure of never owing anybody a sou, was informed that the household was penniless, with two quarters' rent owing, and on the eve, in fact, of an execution.

This reality of Paris life pierced Dinah's heart like a thorn; she repented of having tempted Étienne into the extravagances of love. It is so difficult to pass from pleasure to work, that happiness has wrecked more poems than sorrows ever helped to flow in sparkling jets. Dinah, happy in seeing Étienne taking his ease, smoking a cigar after breakfast, his face beaming as he basked like a lizard in the sunshine, could not summon up courage enough to make herself the bum-bailiff of a magazine.

It struck her that through the worthy Migeon, Pamela's father, she might pawn the few jewels she possessed, on which her 'uncle,' for she was learning to talk the slang of the town, advanced her nine hundred francs. She kept three hundred for her baby-clothes and the expenses of her illness, and joyfully presented the sum due to Lousteau, who was ploughing, furrow by furrow, or, if you will, line by line, through a novel for a periodical.

'Dearest heart,' said she, 'finish your novel without making any sacrifice to necessity; polish the style, work up the subject.—I have played the fine lady too long; I am going to be the house-wife and attend to business.'

For the last four months Étienne had been taking Dinah to the Café Riche to dine every day, a corner being always kept for them. The country-woman was in dismay at being told that five hundred francs were owing for the last fortnight.

'What! we have been drinking wine at six francs a bottle! A sole *Normande* costs five francs!—and twenty centimes for a roll?' she exclaimed, as she looked through the bill Lousteau showed her.

'Well, it makes very little difference to us whether we are robbed at a restaurant or by a cook,' said Lousteau.

'Henceforth, for the cost of your dinner, you shall live like a prince.'

Having induced the landlord to let her have a kitchen and two servants' rooms, Madame de La Baudraye wrote a few lines to her mother, begging her to send her some linen and a loan of a thousand francs. She received two trunks full of linen, some plate, and two thousand francs, sent by the hand of an honest and pious cook recommended her by her mother.

Ten days after the evening at the theatre when they had met, Monsieur de Clagny came to call at four o'clock, after coming out of court, and found Madame de La Baudraye making a little cap. The sight of this proud and ambitious woman, whose mind was so accomplished, and who had queened it so well at the Château d'Anzy, now condescending to household cares and sewing for the coming infant, moved the poor lawyer, who had just left the bench. And as he saw the pricks on one of the taper fingers he had so often kissed, he understood that Madame de La Baudraye was not merely playing at this maternal task.

In the course of this first interview the magistrate saw to the depths of Dinah's soul. This perspicacity in a man so much in love was a superhuman effort. He saw that Didine meant to be the journalist's guardian spirit and lead him into a nobler road; she had seen that the difficulties of his practical life were due to some moral defects. Between two beings united by love—in one so genuine, and in the other so well feigned—more than one confidence had been exchanged in the course of four months. Notwithstanding the care with which Étienne wrapped up his true self, a word now and then had not failed to enlighten Dinah as to the previous life of a man whose talents were so hampered by poverty, so perverted by bad examples, so thwarted by obstacles beyond his courage to surmount. 'He will be a greater man if life is easy to him,' said she to herself. And she strove to make him happy, to give him the sense of a sheltered home by dint of such economy and method as are familiar to provincial folks. Thus Dinah became a housekeeper, as she had become a poet, by the soaring of her soul towards the heights.

'His happiness will be my absolution.'

These words, wrung from Madame de La Baudraye by her friend the lawyer, accounted for the existing state of things. The publicity of his triumph, flaunted by Étienne on the evening of the first performance, had very plainly shown the lawyer what Lousteau's purpose was. To Étienne, Madame de La Baudraye was, to use his own phrase, 'a fine feather in his cap.' Far from preferring the joys of a shy and mysterious passion, of hiding such exquisite happiness from the eyes of the world, he found vulgar satisfaction in displaying the first woman of respectability who had ever honoured him with her affection.

The Judge, however, was for some time deceived by the attentions which any man would lavish on any woman in Madame de La Baudraye's situation, and Lousteau

made them doubly charming by the ingratiating ways characteristic of men whose manners are naturally attractive. There are, in fact, men who have something of the monkey in them by nature, and to whom the assumption of the most engaging forms of sentiment is so easy that the actor is not detected; and Lousteau's natural gifts had been fully developed on the stage on which he had hitherto figured.

Between the months of April and July, when Dinah expected her confinement, she discovered why it was that Lousteau had not triumphed over poverty; he was idle and had no power of will. The brain, to be sure, must obey its own laws; it recognises neither the exigencies of life nor the voice of honour; a man cannot write a great book because a woman is dying, or to pay a discreditable debt, or to bring up a family; at the same time, there is no great talent without a strong will. These twin forces are requisite for the erection of the vast edifice of personal glory. A distinguished genius keeps his brain in a productive condition, just as the knights of old kept their weapons always ready for battle. They conquer indolence, they deny themselves enervating pleasures, or indulge only to a fixed limit proportioned to their powers. This explains the life of such men as Walter Scott, Cuvier, Voltaire, Newton, Buffon, Bayle, Bossuet, Leibnitz, Lopez de Vega, Calderon, Boccaccio, Aretino, Aristotle—in short, every man who delighted, governed, or led his contemporaries.

A man may and ought to pride himself more on his will than on his talent. Though Talent has its germ in a cultivated gift, Will means the incessant conquest of his instincts, of proclivities subdued and mortified, and difficulties of every kind heroically defeated. The abuse of smoking encouraged Lousteau's indolence. Tobacco, which can lull grief, inevitably numbs a man's energy.

Then, while the cigar deteriorated him physically, criticism as a profession morally stultified a man so easily tempted by pleasure. Criticism is as fatal to the critic as seeing two sides of a question is to a pleader. In these professions the judgment is undermined, the mind loses its lucid rectitude. The writer lives by taking sides. Thus, we may distinguish two kinds of criticism, as in painting we may distinguish art from practical dexterity. Criticism, after the pattern of most contemporary leader-writers, is the expression of judgments formed at random in a more or less witty way, just as an advocate pleads in court on the most contradictory briefs. The newspaper critic always finds a subject to work up in the book he is discussing. Done after this fashion, the business is well adapted to indolent brains, to men devoid of the sublime faculty of imagination, or, possessed of it indeed, but lacking courage to cultivate it. Every play, every book comes to their pen as a subject, making no demand on their imagination, and of which they simply write a report, seriously or in irony, according to the mood of the moment. As to an opinion, whatever it may be, French wit can always justify it, being admirably ready to defend either side of any case. And conscience counts for so little, these *bravi* have so little value for their own words, that they will loudly praise in the green-room the work they tear to tatters in print.

Nay, men have been known to transfer their services from one paper to another without being at the pains to consider that the opinions of the new sheet must be diametrically antagonistic to those of the old. Madame de La Baudraye could smile to see Lousteau with one article on the Legitimist side and one on the side of the new dynasty, both on the same occasion. She admired the maxim he preached—

'We are the attorneys of public opinion.'

The other kind of criticism is a science. It necessi-

tates a thorough comprehension of each work, a lucid insight into the tendencies of the age, the adoption of a system, and faith in fixed principles—that is to say, a scheme of jurisprudence, a summing-up, and a verdict. The critic is then a magistrate of ideas, the censor of his time; he fulfils a sacred function; while in the former case he is but an acrobat who turns somersaults for a living as long as he has a leg to stand on. Between Claude Vignon and Lousteau lay the gulf that divides mere dexterity from art.

Dinah, whose mind was soon freed from rust, and whose intellect was by no means narrow, had ere long taken literary measure of her idol. She saw Lousteau working up to the last minute under the most discreditable compulsion, and scamping his work, as painters say of a picture from which sound technique is absent; but she would excuse him by saying, 'He is a poet!' so anxious was she to justify him in her own eyes. When she thus guessed the secret of many a writer's existence, she also guessed that Lousteau's pen could never be trusted to as a resource.

Then her love for him led her to take a step she would never have thought of for her own sake. Through her mother she tried to negotiate with her husband for an allowance, but without Étienne's knowledge; for, as she thought, it would be an offence to his delicate feelings, which must be considered. A few days before the end of July, Dinah crumpled up in her wrath the letter from her mother containing Monsieur de La Baudraye's ultimatum—

'Madame de La Baudraye cannot need an allowance in Paris when she can live in perfect luxury at her Château of Anzy: she may return.'

Lousteau picked up this letter and read it.

'I will avenge you!' said he to Dinah in the ominous tone that delights a woman when her antipathies are flattered.

Five days after this, Bianchon and Duriau, the famous ladies' doctor, were engaged at Lousteau's ; for he, ever since little La Baudraye's reply, had been making a great display of his joy and importance over the advent of the infant. Monsieur de Clagny and Madame Piédefer—sent for in all haste—were to be the godparents, for the cautious magistrate feared lest Lousteau should commit some compromising blunder. Madame de La Baudraye gave birth to a boy that might have filled a queen with envy who hoped for an heir-presumptive.

Bianchon and Monsieur de Clagny went off to register the child at the Mayor's office as the son of Monsieur and Madame de La Baudraye, unknown to Étienne, who, on his part, rushed off to a printer's to have this circular set up :—

'*Madame la Baronne de La Baudraye is happily delivered of a son.*

'*Monsieur Étienne Lousteau has the pleasure of informing you of the fact.*

'*The mother and child are doing well.*'

Lousteau had already sent out sixty of these announcements when Monsieur de Clagny, on coming to make inquiries, happened to see the list of the persons at Sancerre to whom Lousteau proposed to send this amazing notice, written below the names of the persons in Paris to whom it was already gone. The lawyer confiscated the list and the remainder of the circulars, showed them to Madame Piédefer, begging her on no account to allow Lousteau to carry on this atrocious jest, and jumped into a cab. The devoted friend then ordered from the same printer another announcement in the following words :—

'*Madame la Baronne de La Baudraye is happily delivered of a son.*

'*Monsieur le Baron de La Baudraye has the honour of informing you of the fact.*

'*Mother and child are doing well.*'

After seeing the proofs destroyed, the forme of type, everything that could bear witness to the existence of the former document, Monsieur de Clagny set to work to intercept those that had been sent; in many cases he changed them at the porter's lodge, he got thirty back into his own hands, and at last, after three days of hard work, only one of the original notes existed, that, namely, sent to Nathan.

Five times had the lawyer called on the great man without finding him. By the time Monsieur de Clagny was admitted, after requesting an interview, the story of the announcement was known to all Paris. Some persons regarded it as one of those waggish calumnies, a sort of stab to which every reputation, even the most ephemeral, is exposed; others said they had read the paper and returned it to some friend of the La Baudraye family; a great many declaimed against the immorality of journalists; in short, this last remaining specimen was regarded as a curiosity. Florine, with whom Nathan was living, had shown it about, stamped in the post as paid, and addressed in Étienne's hand. So, as soon as the judge spoke of the announcement, Nathan began to smile.

'Give up that monument of recklessness and folly?' cried he. 'That autograph is one of those weapons which an athlete in the circus cannot afford to lay down. That note proves that Lousteau has no heart, no taste, no dignity; that he knows nothing of the world nor of public morality; that he insults himself when he can find no one else to insult.—None but the son of a provincial citizen imported from Sancerre to become a poet, but who is only the *bravo* of some contemptible magazine, could ever have sent out such a circular letter, as you must allow, Monsieur. This is a document indispensable

to the archives of the age.—To-day Lousteau flatters me, to-morrow he may ask for my head.—Excuse me, I forgot you were a judge.

'I have gone through a passion for a lady, a great lady, as far superior to Madame de La Baudraye as your fine feeling, Monsieur, is superior to Lousteau's vulgar retaliation ; but I would have died rather than utter her name. A few months of her airs and graces cost me a hundred thousand francs and my prospects for life ; but I do not think the price too high !—And I have never murmured !—If a woman betrays the secret of her passion, it is the supreme offering of her love, but a man !—He must be a Lousteau !

'No, I would not give up that paper for a thousand crowns.

'Monsieur,' said the lawyer at last, after an eloquent battle lasting half an hour, 'I have called on fifteen or sixteen men of letters about this affair, and can it be that you are the only one immovable by an appeal of honour ? It is not for Étienne Lousteau that I plead, but for a woman and child, both equally ignorant of the damage thus done to their fortune, their prospects, and their honour.—Who knows, Monsieur, whether you might not some day be compelled to plead for some favour of justice for a friend, for some person whose honour was dearer to you than your own.—It might be remembered against you that you had been ruthless.—Can such a man as you are hesitate ?' added Monsieur de Clagny.

'I only wished you to understand the extent of the sacrifice,' replied Nathan, giving up the letter, as he reflected on the judge's influence and accepted this implied bargain.

When the journalist's stupid jest had been counteracted, Monsieur de Clagny went to give him a rating in the presence of Madame Piédefer ; but he found Lousteau fuming with irritation.

'What I did, Monsieur, I did with a purpose!' replied Étienne. 'Monsieur de La Baudraye has sixty thousand francs a year, and refuses to make his wife an allowance; I wished to make him feel that the child is in my power.'

'Yes, Monsieur, I quite suspected it,' replied the lawyer. 'For that reason I readily agreed to be little Polydore's godfather, and he is registered as the son of the Baron and Baronne de La Baudraye; if you have the feelings of a father, you ought to rejoice in knowing that the child is heir to one of the finest entailed estates in France.'

'And pray, sir, is the mother to die of hunger?'

'Be quite easy,' said the lawyer bitterly, having dragged from Lousteau the expression of feeling he had so long been expecting. 'I will undertake to transact the matter with Monsieur de La Baudraye.'

Monsieur de Clagny left the house with a chill at his heart.

Dinah, his idol, was loved for her money. Would she not, when too late, have her eyes opened?

'Poor woman!' said the lawyer, as he walked away. And this justice we will do him—for to whom should justice be done unless to a Judge?—he loved Dinah too sincerely to regard her degradation as a means of triumph one day; he was all pity and devotion; he really loved her.

The care and nursing of the infant, its cries, the quiet needed for the mother during the first few days, and the ubiquity of Madame Piédefer, were so entirely adverse to literary labours, that Lousteau moved up to the three rooms taken on the first floor for the old bigot. The journalist, obliged to go to first performances without Dinah, and living apart from her, found an indescribable charm in the use of his liberty. More than once he submitted to be taken by the arm and dragged off to

some jollification; more than once he found himself at the house of a friend's mistress in the heart of bohemia. He again saw women brilliantly young and splendidly dressed, in whom economy seemed treason to their youth and power. Dinah, in spite of her striking beauty, after nursing her baby for three months, could not stand comparison with these perishable blossoms, so soon faded, but so showy as long as they live rooted in opulence.

Home life had, nevertheless, a strong attraction for Étienne. In three months the mother and daughter, with the help of the cook from Sancerre and of little Pamela, had given the apartment a quite changed appearance. The journalist found his breakfast and his dinner there served with a sort of luxury. Dinah, handsome and nicely dressed, was careful to anticipate her dear Étienne's wishes, and he felt himself the king of his home, where everything, even the baby, was subject to his selfishness. Dinah's affection was to be seen in every trifle; Lousteau could not possibly cease the entrancing deceptions of his unreal passion.

Dinah, meanwhile, was aware of a source of ruin, both to her love and to the household, in the kind of life into which Lousteau had allowed himself to drift. At the end of ten months she weaned her baby, installed her mother in the upstairs rooms, and restored the family intimacy which indissolubly links a man and woman when the woman is loving and clever. One of the most striking circumstances in Benjamin Constant's novel, one of the explanations of Ellénore's desertion, is the want of daily—or, if you will, of nightly—intercourse between her and Adolphe. Each of the lovers has a separate home; they have both submitted to the world and saved appearances. Ellénore, repeatedly left to herself, is compelled to vast labours of affection to expel the thoughts of release which captivate Adolphe when absent. The constant exchange of glances and

thoughts in domestic life gives a woman such power that a man needs stronger reasons for desertion than she will ever give him so long as she loves him.

This was an entirely new phase both to Étienne and to Dinah. Dinah intended to be indispensable; she wanted to infuse fresh energy into this man, whose weakness smiled upon her, for she thought it a security. She found him subjects, sketched the treatment, and at a pinch, would write whole chapters. She revived the vitality of this dying talent by transfusing fresh blood into his veins; she supplied him with ideas and opinions. In short, she produced two books which were a success. More than once she saved Lousteau's self-esteem by dictating, correcting, or finishing his articles when he was in despair at his own lack of ideas. The secret of this collaboration was strictly preserved; Madame Piédefer knew nothing of it.

This mental galvanism was rewarded by improved pay, enabling them to live comfortably till the end of 1838. Lousteau became used to seeing Dinah do his work, and he paid her—as the French people say in their vigorous lingo—in 'monkey money,' nothing for her pains. This expenditure in self-sacrifice becomes a treasure which generous souls prize, and the more she gave the more she loved Lousteau; the time soon came when Dinah felt that it would be too bitter a grief ever to give him up.

But then another child was coming, and this year was a terrible trial. In spite of the precautions of the two women, Étienne contracted debts; he worked himself to death to pay them off while Dinah was laid up; and, knowing him as she did, she thought him heroic. But after this effort, appalled at having two women, two children, and two maids on his hands, he was incapable of the struggle to maintain a family by his pen when he had failed to maintain even himself. So he let things take their chance. Then the ruthless

speculator exaggerated the farce of love-making at home to secure greater liberty abroad.

Dinah proudly endured the burden of life without support. The one idea, 'He loves me!' gave her superhuman strength. She worked as hard as the most energetic spirits of our time. At the risk of her beauty and health, Didine was to Lousteau what Mademoiselle Delachaux was to Gardane, in Diderot's noble and true tale. But while sacrificing herself, she committed the magnanimous blunder of sacrificing dress. She had her gowns dyed, and wore nothing but black. She stank of black, as Malaga said, making fun mercilessly of Lousteau.

By the end of 1839, Étienne, following the example of Louis xv., had, by dint of gradual capitulations of conscience, come to the point of establishing a distinction between his own money and the housekeeping money, just as Louis xv. drew the line between his privy purse and the public moneys. He deceived Dinah as to his earnings. On discovering this baseness, Madame de La Baudraye went through fearful tortures of jealousy. She wanted to live two lives—the life of the world and the life of a literary woman; she accompanied Lousteau to every first-night performance, and could detect in him many impulses of wounded vanity, for her black attire rubbed off, as it were, on him, clouding his brow, and sometimes leading him to be quite brutal. He was really the woman of the two; and he had all a woman's exacting perversity; he would reproach Dinah for the dowdiness of her appearance, even while benefiting by the sacrifice, which to a mistress is so cruel—exactly like a woman who, after sending a man through a gutter to save her honour, tells him she 'cannot bear dirt!' when he comes out.

Dinah then found herself obliged to gather up the rather loose reins of power by which a clever woman drives a man devoid of will. But in so doing she could

not fail to lose much of her moral lustre. Such suspicions as she betrayed drag a woman into quarrels which lead to disrespect, because she herself comes down from the high level on which she had at first placed herself. Next she made some concessions: Lousteau was allowed to entertain several of his friends —Nathan, Bixiou, Blondet, Finot—whose manners, language, and intercourse were depraving. They tried to convince Madame de La Baudraye that her principles and aversions were a survival of provincial prudishness; and they preached the creed of woman's superiority.

Before long, her jealousy put weapons into Lousteau's hands. During the carnival of 1840, she disguised herself to go to the balls at the Opera-house, and to suppers where she met courtesans, in order to keep an eye on all Étienne's amusements.

On the day of Mid-Lent—or rather, at eight on the morning after—Dinah came home from the ball in her fancy dress to go to bed. She had gone to spy on Lousteau, who, believing her to be ill, had engaged himself for that evening to Fanny Beaupré. The journalist, warned by a friend, had behaved so as to deceive the poor woman, only too ready to be deceived.

As she stepped out of the hired cab, Dinah met Monsieur de La Baudraye, to whom the porter pointed her out. The little old man took his wife by the arm, saying, in an icy tone—

'So this is you, Madame!'

This sudden advent of conjugal authority, before which she felt herself so small, and, above all, these words, almost froze the heart of the unhappy woman caught in the costume of a *débardeur*. To escape Étienne's eye the more effectually, she had chosen a dress he was not likely to detect her in. She took advantage of the mask she still had on to escape without replying, changed her dress, and went up to her mother's rooms, where she found her husband waiting for her. In spite

of her assumed dignity, she blushed in the old man's presence.

'What do you want of me, Monsieur?' she asked. 'Are we not separated for ever?'

'Actually, yes,' said Monsieur de La Baudraye. 'Legally, no.'

Madame Piédefer was telegraphing signals to her daughter, which Dinah presently observed and understood.

'Nothing could have brought you here but your own interests,' she said, in a bitter tone.

'*Our* interests,' said the little man coldly, 'for we have two children.—Your uncle Silas Piédefer is dead, at New York, where, after having made and lost several fortunes in various parts of the world, he has finally left some seven or eight hundred thousand francs—they say twelve—but there is stock-in-trade to be sold. I am the chief in our common interests, and act for you.'

'Oh!' cried Dinah, 'in everything that relates to business, I trust no one but Monsieur de Clagny. He knows the law, come to terms with him; what he does, will be done right.'

'I have no occasion for Monsieur Clagny,' answered Monsieur de La Baudraye, 'to take my children from you——'

'Your children!' exclaimed Dinah. 'Your children, to whom you have not sent a sou! *Your* children!' She burst into a loud shout of laughter; but Monsieur de La Baudraye's unmoved coolness threw ice on the explosion.

'Your mother has just brought them to show me,' he went on. 'They are charming boys. I do not intend to part from them. I shall take them to our house at Anzy, if it were only to save them from seeing their mother disguised like a——'

'Silence!' said Madame de La Baudraye imperatively. 'What do you want of me that brought you here?'

'A power of attorney to receive our uncle Silas's property.'

Dinah took a pen, wrote two lines to Monsieur de Clagny, and desired her husband to call again in the afternoon.

At five o'clock, Monsieur de Clagny—who had been promoted to the post of Attorney-General—enlightened Madame de La Baudraye as to her position; still, he undertook to arrange everything by a bargain with the old fellow, whose visit had been prompted by avarice alone. Monsieur de La Baudraye, to whom his wife's power of attorney was indispensable to enable him to deal with the business as he wished, purchased it by certain concessions. In the first place, he undertook to allow her ten thousand francs a year so long as she found it convenient—so the document was worded—to reside in Paris; the children, each on attaining the age of six, were to be placed in Monsieur de La Baudraye's keeping. Finally, the lawyer extracted the payment of the allowance in advance.

Little La Baudraye, who came jauntily enough to say good-bye to his wife and *his* children, appeared in a white indiarubber overcoat. He was so firm on his feet, and so exactly like the La Baudraye of 1836, that Dinah despaired of ever burying the dreadful little dwarf. From the garden, where he was smoking a cigar, the journalist could watch Monsieur de La Baudraye for so long as it took the little reptile to cross the forecourt, but that was enough for Lousteau; it was plain to him that the little man had intended to wreck every hope of his dying that his wife might have conceived.

This short scene made a considerable change in the writer's secret scheming. As he smoked a second cigar, he seriously reviewed the position.

His life with Madame de La Baudraye had hitherto cost him quite as much as it had cost her. To use the language of business, the two sides of the account

balanced, and they could, if necessary, cry quits. Considering how small his income was, and how hardly he earned it, Lousteau regarded himself, morally speaking, as the creditor. It was, no doubt, a favourable moment for throwing the woman over. Tired at the end of three years of playing a comedy which never can become a habit, he was perpetually concealing his weariness; and this fellow, who was accustomed to disguise none of his feelings, compelled himself to wear a smile at home like that of a debtor in the presence of his creditor. This compulsion was every day more intolerable.

Hitherto the immense advantages he foresaw in the future had given him strength; but when he saw Monsieur de La Baudraye embark for the United States, as briskly as if it were to go down to Rouen in a steamboat, he ceased to believe in the future.

He went in from the garden to the pretty drawing-room, where Dinah had just taken leave of her husband.

'Étienne,' said Madame de La Baudraye, 'do you know what my lord and master has proposed to me? In the event of my wishing to return to live at Anzy during his absence, he has left his orders, and he hopes that my mother's good advice will weigh with me, and that I shall go back there with my children.'

'It is very good advice,' replied Lousteau drily, knowing the passionate disclaimer that Dinah expected, and indeed begged for with her eyes.

The tone, the words, the cold look, all hit the hapless woman so hard, who lived only in her love, that two large tears trickled slowly down her cheeks, while she did not speak a word, and Lousteau only saw them when she took out her handkerchief to wipe away these two beads of anguish.

'What is it, Didine?' he asked, touched to the heart by this excessive sensibility.

'Just as I was priding myself on having won our freedom,' said she—'at the cost of my fortune—by selling—what is most precious to a mother's heart—

selling my children !—for he is to have them from the age of six—and I cannot see them without going to Sancerre !—and that is torture !—Ah, dear God ! What have I done—— ?'

Lousteau knelt down by her and kissed her hands with a lavish display of coaxing and petting.

'You do not understand me,' said he. 'I blame myself, for I am not worth such sacrifices, dear angel. I am, in a literary sense, a quite second-rate man. If the day comes when I can no longer cut a figure at the bottom of the newspaper, the editors will let me lie, like an old shoe flung into the rubbish heap. Remember, we tight-rope dancers have no retiring pension ! The State would have too many clever men on its hands if it started on such a career of beneficence. I am forty-two, and I am as idle as a marmot. I feel it—I know it'—and he took her hand—'my love can only be fatal to you.

'As you know, at two-and-twenty I lived on Florine; but what is excusable in a youth, what then seems smart and charming, is a disgrace to a man of forty. Hitherto we have shared the burden of existence, and it has not been lovely for this year and half. Out of devotion to me you wear nothing but black, and that does me no credit.'—Dinah gave one of those magnanimous shrugs which are worth all the words ever spoken.—'Yes,' Étienne went on, 'I know you sacrifice everything to my whims, even your beauty. And I, with a heart worn out in past struggles, a soul full of dark presentiments as to the future, I cannot repay your exquisite love with an equal affection. We were very happy—without a cloud—for a long time.—Well, then, I cannot bear to see so sweet a poem end badly. Am I wrong ?'

Madame de La Baudraye loved Étienne so truly, that this prudence, worthy of de Clagny, gratified her and stanched her tears.

'He loves me for myself alone!' thought she, looking at him with smiling eyes.

After four years of intimacy, this woman's love now combined every shade of affection which our powers of analysis can discern, and which modern society has created; one of the most remarkable men of our age, whose death is a recent loss to the world of letters, Beyle (Stendhal), was the first to delineate them to perfection.

Lousteau could produce in Dinah the acute agitation which may be compared to magnetism, that upsets every power of the mind and body, and overcomes every instinct of resistance in a woman. A look from him, or his hand laid on hers, reduced her to implicit obedience. A kind word or a smile wreathed the poor woman's soul with flowers; a fond look elated, a cold look depressed her. When she walked, taking his arm and keeping step with him in the street or on the boulevard, she was so entirely absorbed in him that she lost all sense of herself. Fascinated by this fellow's wit, magnetised by his airs, his vices were but trivial defects in her eyes. She loved the puffs of cigar smoke that the wind brought into her room from the garden; she went to inhale them, and made no wry faces, hiding herself to enjoy them. She hated the publisher or the newspaper editor who refused Lousteau money on the ground of the enormous advances he had had already. She deluded herself so far as to believe that her bohemian was writing a novel, for which the payment was to come, instead of working off a debt long since incurred.

This, no doubt, is true love, and includes every mode of loving; the love of the heart and of the head—passion, caprice, and taste—to accept Beyle's definitions. Didine loved him so wholly, that in certain moments when her critical judgment, just by nature, and constantly exercised since she had lived in Paris, compelled her to read to the bottom of Lousteau's soul, sense was still too much for reason, and suggested excuses.

'And what am I?' she replied. 'A woman who has put herself outside the pale. Since I have sacrificed all a woman's honour, why should not you sacrifice to me some of a man's honour? Do we not live outside the limits of social conventionality? Why not accept from me what Nathan can accept from Florine? We will square accounts when we part, and only death can part us—you know. My happiness is your honour, Étienne, as my constancy and your happiness are mine. If I fail to make you happy, all is at an end. If I cause you a pang, condemn me.

'Our debts are paid; we have ten thousand francs a year, and between us we can certainly make eight thousand francs a year—I will write theatrical articles. —With fifteen hundred francs a month we shall be as rich as Rothschild.—Be quite easy. I will have some lovely dresses, and give you every day some gratified vanity, as on the first night of Nathan's play——'

'And what about your mother, who goes to Mass every day, and wants to bring a priest to the house and make you give up this way of life?'

'Every one has a pet vice. You smoke, she preaches at me, poor woman! But she takes great care of the children, she takes them out, she is absolutely devoted, and idolises me. Would you hinder her from crying?'

'What will be thought of me?'

'But we do not live for the world!' cried she, raising Étienne and making him sit by her. 'Besides, we shall be married some day—we have the risks of a sea voyage——'

'I never thought of that,' said Lousteau simply; and he added to himself, 'Time enough to part when little La Baudraye is safe back again.'

From that day forth Étienne lived in luxury; and Dinah, on first nights, could hold her own with the best dressed women in Paris. Lousteau was so fatuous

as to affect, among his friends, the attitude of a man overborne, bored to extinction, ruined by Madame de La Baudraye.

'Oh, what would I not give to the friend who would deliver me from Dinah! But no one ever can!' said he. 'She loves me enough to throw herself out of the window if I told her.'

The journalist was duly pitied; he would take precautions against Dinah's jealousy when he accepted an invitation. And then he was shamelessly unfaithful. Monsieur de Clagny, really in despair at seeing Dinah in such disgraceful circumstances when she might have been so rich, and in so wretched a position at the time when her original ambitions would have been fulfilled, came to warn her, to tell her—'You are betrayed,' and she only replied, 'I know it.'

The lawyer was silenced; still he found his tongue to say one thing.

Madame de La Baudraye interrupted him when he had scarcely spoken a word.

'Do you still love me?' she asked.

'I would lose my soul for you!' he exclaimed, starting to his feet.

The hapless man's eyes flashed like torches, he trembled like a leaf, his throat was rigid, his hair thrilled to the roots; he believed he was so blessed as to be accepted as his idol's avenger, and this poor joy filled him with rapture.

'Why are you so startled?' said she, making him sit down again. 'That is how I love him.'

The lawyer understood this argument *ad hominem*. And there were tears in the eyes of the Judge, who had just condemned a man to death!

Lousteau's satiety, that odious conclusion of such illicit relations, had betrayed itself in a thousand little things, which are like grains of sand thrown against the panes of the little magical hut where those who love

dwell and dream. These grains of sand, which grow to be pebbles, had never been discerned by Dinah till they were as big as rocks. Madame de La Baudraye had at last thoroughly understood Lousteau's character.

'He is,' she had said to her mother, 'a poet, defenceless against disaster, mean out of laziness, not for want of heart, and rather too prone to pleasure; in short, a great cat, whom it is impossible to hate. What would become of him without me? I hindered his marriage; he has no prospects. His talent would perish in privation.'

'Oh, my Dinah!' Madame Piédefer had exclaimed, 'what a hell you live in! What is the feeling that gives you strength enough to persist?'

'I will be a mother to him!' she had replied.

There are certain horrible situations in which we come to no decision till the moment when our friends discern our dishonour. We accept compromises with ourself so long as we escape a censor who comes to play prosecutor. Monsieur de Clagny, as clumsy as a tortured man, had been torturing Dinah.

'To preserve my love I will be all that Madame de Pompadour was to preserve her power,' said she to herself when Monsieur de Clagny had left her. And this phrase sufficiently proves that her love was becoming a burden to her, and would presently be a toil rather than a pleasure.

The part now assumed by Dinah was horribly painful, and Lousteau made it no easier to play. When he wanted to go out after dinner he would perform the tenderest little farces of affection, and address Dinah in words full of devotion; he would take her by the chain, and when he had bruised her with it, even while he hurt her, the lordly ingrate would say, 'Did I wound you?'

These false caresses and deceptions had degrading consequences for Dinah, who believed in a revival of his love. The mother, alas, gave way to the mistress with

shameful readiness. She felt herself a mere plaything in the man's hands, and at last she confessed to herself—

'Well, then, I will be his plaything!' finding joy in it—the rapture of damnation.

When this woman, of a really manly spirit, pictured herself as living in solitude, she felt her courage fail. She preferred the anticipated and inevitable miseries of this fierce intimacy to the absence of the joys, which were all the more exquisite because they arose from the midst of remorse, of terrible struggles with herself, of a *No* persuaded to be *Yes*. At every moment she seemed to come across the pool of bitter water found in a desert, and drunk with greater relish than the traveller would find in sipping the finest wines at a prince's table.

When Dinah wondered to herself at midnight—

'Will he come home, or will he not?' she was not alive again till she heard the familiar sound of Lousteau's boots, and his well-known ring at the bell.

She would often try to restrain him by giving him pleasure; she would hope to be a match for her rivals, and leave them no hold on that satiated heart. How many times a day would she rehearse the tragedy of *Le Dernier Jour d'un condamné*, saying to herself, 'To-morrow we part.' And how often would a word, a look, a kiss full of apparently artless feeling, bring her back to the depths of her love!

It was terrible. More than once had she meditated suicide as she paced the little town garden where a few pale flowers bloomed. In fact, she had not yet exhausted the vast treasure of devotion and love which a loving woman bears in her heart.

The romance of *Adolphe* was her Bible, her study, for above all else she would not be an Ellénore. She allowed herself no tears, she avoided all the bitterness so cleverly described by the critic to whom we owe an analysis of this striking work; whose comments indeed seemed to Dinah almost superior to the book. And she

read again and again this fine essay by the only real critic who has written in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, an article now printed at the beginning of the new edition of *Adolphe*.

'No,' she would say to herself, as she repeated the author's fateful words, 'no, I will not "give my requests the form of an order," I will not "fly to tears as a means of revenge," I will not "condemn the things I once approved without reservation," I will not "dog his footsteps with a prying eye"; if he plays truant, he shall not on his return "see a scornful lip, whose kiss is an unanswerable command." No, "my silence shall not be a reproach nor my first word a quarrel."—I will not be like every other woman!' she went on, laying on her table the little yellow paper volume which had already attracted Lousteau's remark, 'What! are you studying *Adolphe*?'—'If for one day only he should recognise my merits and say, "That victim never uttered a cry!"—it will be all I ask. And besides, the others only have him for an hour; I have him for life!'

Thinking himself justified by his private tribunal in punishing his wife, Monsieur de La Baudraye robbed her to achieve his cherished enterprise of reclaiming three thousand acres of moorland, to which he had devoted himself ever since 1836, living like a mouse. He manipulated the property left by Monsieur Silas Piédefer so ingeniously, that he contrived to reduce the proved value to eight hundred thousand francs, while pocketing twelve hundred thousand. He did not announce his return; but while his wife was enduring unspeakable woes, he was building farms, digging trenches, and ploughing rough ground with a courage that ranked him among the most remarkable agriculturists of the province.

The four hundred thousand francs he had filched from his wife were spent in three years on this undertaking,

and the estate of Anzy was expected to return seventy-two thousand francs a year of net profits after the taxes were paid. The eight hundred thousand he invested at four and a half per cent in the funds, buying at eighty francs, at the time of the financial crisis brought about by the Ministry of the First of March, as it was called. By thus securing to his wife an income of forty-eight thousand francs he considered himself no longer in her debt. Could he not restore the odd twelve hundred thousand as soon as the four and a half per cents. had risen above a hundred? He was now the greatest man in Sancerre, with the exception of one—the richest proprietor in France—whose rival he considered himself. He saw himself with an income of a hundred and forty thousand francs, of which ninety thousand formed the revenue from the lands he had entailed. Having calculated that besides this net income he paid ten thousand francs in taxes, three thousand in working expenses, ten thousand to his wife, and twelve hundred to his mother-in-law, he would say in the literary circles of Sancerre—

'I am reputed miserly, and said to spend nothing; but my outlay amounts to twenty-six thousand five hundred francs a year. And I have still to pay for the education of my two children! I daresay it is not a pleasing fact to the Milauds of Nevers, but the second house of La Baudraye may yet have as noble a career as the first.—I shall most likely go to Paris and petition the King of the French to grant me the title of Count—Monsieur Roy is a Count—and my wife would be pleased to be Madame la Comtesse.'

And this was said with such splendid coolness that no one would have dared to laugh at the little man. Only Monsieur Boirouge, the Presiding Judge, remarked—

'In your place, I should not be happy unless I had a daughter.'

'Well, I shall go to Paris before long——' said the Baron.

In the early part of 1842 Madame de La Baudraye, feeling that she was to Lousteau no more than a reserve in the background, had again sacrificed herself absolutely to secure his comfort; she had resumed her black raiment, but now it was in sign of mourning, for her pleasure was turning to remorse. She was too often put to shame not to feel the weight of the chain, and her mother found her sunk in those moods of meditation into which visions of the future cast unhappy souls in a sort of torpor.

Madame Piédefer, by the advice of her spiritual director, was on the watch for the moment of exhaustion, which the priest told her would inevitably supervene, and then she pleaded in behalf of the children. She restricted herself to urging that Dinah and Lousteau should live apart, not asking her to give him up. In real life these violent situations are not closed as they are in books, by death or cleverly contrived catastrophes; they end far less poetically—in disgust, in the blighting of every flower of the soul, in the commonplace of habit, and very often too in another passion, which robs a wife of the interest which is traditionally ascribed to women. So, when common sense, the law of social proprieties, family interest—all the mixed elements which, since the Restoration, have been dignified by the name of Public Morals, out of sheer aversion to the name of the Catholic religion—where this is seconded by a sense of insults a little too offensive; when the fatigue of constant self-sacrifice has almost reached the point of exhaustion; and when, under these circumstances, a too cruel blow—one of those mean acts which a man never lets a woman know of unless he believes himself to be her assured master—puts the crowning touch to her revulsion and disenchantment, the moment has come for the intervention of the friend who undertakes the cure. Madame Piédefer had no great difficulty now in removing the film from her daughter's eyes.

She sent for Monsieur de Clagny, who completed the work by assuring Madame de La Baudraye that if she would give up Étienne, her husband would allow her to keep the children and to live in Paris, and would restore her to the command of her own fortune.

'And what a life you are leading!' said he. 'With care and judgment, and the support of some pious and charitable persons, you may have a salon and conquer a position. Paris is not Sancerre.'

Dinah left it to Monsieur de Clagny to negotiate a reconciliation with the old man.

Monsieur de La Baudraye had sold his wine well, he had sold his wool, he had felled his timber, and, without telling his wife, he had come to Paris to invest two hundred thousand francs in the purchase of a delightful residence in the Rue de l'Arcade, that was being sold in liquidation of an aristocratic House that was in difficulties. He had been a member of the Council for the Department since 1826, and now, paying ten thousand francs in taxes, he was doubly qualified for a peerage under the conditions of the new legislation.

Some time before the elections of 1842 he had put himself forward as candidate unless he were meanwhile called to the Upper House as Peer of France. At the same time, he asked for the title of Count, and for promotion to the higher grade of the Legion of Honour. In the matter of the elections, the Ministry approved of everything that could give strength to the dynastic nominations; now, in the event of Monsieur de La Baudraye being won over to the Government, Sancerre would be more than ever a rotten borough of royalism. Monsieur de Clagny, whose talents and modesty were more and more highly appreciated by the authorities, gave Monsieur de La Baudraye his support; he pointed out that by raising this enterprising agriculturist to the peerage, a guarantee would be offered to such important undertakings.

Monsieur de La Baudraye, then, a Count, a Peer of France, and Commander of the Legion of Honour, was vain enough to wish to cut a figure with a wife and handsomely appointed house.—'He wanted to enjoy life,' he said.

He therefore addressed a letter to his wife, dictated by Monsieur de Clagny, begging her to live under his roof and to furnish the house, giving play to the taste of which the evidences, he said, had charmed him at the Château d'Anzy. The newly made Count pointed out to his wife that while the interests of their property forbade his leaving Sancerre, the education of their boys required her presence in Paris. The accommodating husband desired Monsieur de Clagny to place sixty thousand francs at the disposal of Madame la Comtesse for the interior decoration of their mansion, requesting that she would have a marble tablet inserted over the gateway with the inscription: *Hôtel de La Baudraye.*

He then accounted to his wife for the money derived from the estate of Silas Piédefer, told her of the investment at four and a half per cent. of the eight hundred thousand francs he had brought from New York, and allowed her that income for her expenses, including the education of the children. As he would be compelled to stay in Paris during some part of the session of the House of Peers, he requested his wife to reserve for him a little suite of rooms in an *entresol* over the kitchens.

'Bless me! why, he is growing young again—a gentleman!—a magnifico!—What will he become next? It is quite alarming,' said Madame de La Baudraye.

'He now fulfils all your wishes at the age of twenty,' replied the lawyer.

The comparison of her future prospects with her present position was unendurable to Dinah. Only the day before, Anna de Fontaine had turned her head away

in order to avoid seeing her bosom friend at the Chamarolles' school.

'I am a countess,' said Dinah to herself. 'I shall have the peer's blue hammer-cloth on my carriage, and the leaders of the literary world in my drawing-room—and I will look at her!'—And it was this little triumph that told with all its weight at the moment of her rehabilitation, as the world's contempt had of old weighed on her happiness.

One fine day, in May 1842, Madame de La Baudraye paid all her little household debts and left a thousand crowns on the top of the packet of receipted bills. After sending her mother and the children away to the Hôtel de La Baudraye, she awaited Lousteau, dressed ready to leave the house. When the deposed king of her heart came in to dinner, she said—

'I have upset the pot, my dear. Madame de La Baudraye requests the pleasure of your company at the *Rocher de Cancale*.'

She carried off Lousteau, quite bewildered by the light and easy manners assumed by the woman who till that morning had been the slave of his least whim, for she too had been acting a farce for two months past.

'Madame de La Baudraye is figged out as if for a first night,' said he—*une première*, the slang abbreviation for a first performance.

'Do not forget the respect you owe to Madame de La Baudraye,' said Dinah gravely. 'I do not mean to understand such a word as *figged out*.'

'Didine a rebel?' said he, putting his arm round her waist.

'There is no such person as Didine; you have killed her, my dear,' she replied, releasing herself. 'I am taking you to the first performance of *Madame la Comtesse de La Baudraye*.'

'It is true, then, that our insect is a peer of France?'

'The nomination is to be gazetted in this evening's *Moniteur*, as I am told by Monsieur de Clagny, who is promoted to the Court of Appeal.'

'Well, it is quite right,' said the journalist. 'The entomology of society ought to be represented in the Upper House.'

'My friend, we are parting for ever,' said Madame de La Baudraye, trying to control the trembling of her voice. 'I have dismissed the two servants. When you go in, you will find the house in order, and no debts. I shall always feel a mother's affection for you, but in secret. Let us part calmly, without a fuss, like decent people.

'Have you had a fault to find with my conduct during the past six years?'

'None, but that you have spoilt my life and wrecked my prospects,' said he in a hard tone. 'You have read Benjamin Constant's book very diligently; you have even studied the last critique on it; but you have read with a woman's eyes. Though you have one of those superior intellects which would make the fortune of a poet, you have never dared to take the man's point of view.

'That book, my dear, is of both sexes.—We agreed that books were male or female, dark or fair. In *Adolphe* women see nothing but Ellénore; young men see only Adolphe; men of experience see Ellénore and Adolphe; political men see the whole of social existence. You did not think it necessary to read the soul of Adolphe—any more than your critic indeed, who saw only Ellénore. What kills that poor fellow, my dear, is that he has sacrificed his future for a woman; that he never can be what he might have been—an ambassador, a minister, a chamberlain, a poet—and rich. He gives up six years of his energy at that stage of his life when a man is ready to submit to the hardships of any apprenticeship—to a petticoat, which he outstrips in

the career of ingratitude, for the woman who has thrown over her first lover is certain sooner or later to desert the second. Adolphe is, in fact, a tow-haired German, who has not spirit enough to be false to Ellénore. There are Adolphes who spare their Ellénores all ignominious quarrelling and reproaches, who say to themselves, "I will not talk of what I have sacrificed ; I will not for ever be showing the stump of my wrist to that incarnate selfishness I have made my queen," as Ramorny does in *The Fair Maid of Perth*. But men like that, my dear, get cast aside.

'Adolphe is a man of birth, an aristocratic nature, who wants to get back into the high road to honours and recover his social birthright, his blighted position.—You, at this moment, are playing both parts. You are suffering from the pangs of having lost your position, and think yourself justified in throwing over a hapless lover whose misfortune it has been that he fancied you so far superior as to understand that, though a man's heart ought to be true, his sex may be allowed to indulge its caprices.'

'And do you suppose that I shall not make it my business to restore to you all you have lost by me? Be quite easy,' said Madame de La Baudraye, astounded by this attack. 'Your Ellénore is not dying ; and if God gives her life, if you amend your ways, if you give up courtesans and actresses, we will find you a better match than a Félicie Cardot.'

The two lovers were sullen. Lousteau affected dejection, he aimed at appearing hard and cold ; while Dinah, really distressed, listened to the reproaches of her heart.

'Why,' said Lousteau presently, 'why not end as we ought to have begun—hide our love from all eyes, and see each other in secret ? '

'Never ! ' cried the new-made Countess, with an icy look. 'Do you not comprehend that we are, after all,

but finite creatures? Our feelings seem infinite by reason of our anticipation of heaven, but here on earth they are limited by the strength of our physical being. There are some feeble, mean natures which may receive an endless number of wounds and live on; but there are some more highly-tempered souls which snap at last under repeated blows. You have——'

'Oh! enough!' cried he. 'No more copy! Your dissertation is unnecessary, since you can justify yourself by merely saying—"I have ceased to love!"'

'What!' she exclaimed in bewilderment. 'Is it I who have ceased to love?'

'Certainly. You have calculated that I gave you more trouble, more vexation than pleasure, and you desert your partner——'

'I desert!——' cried she, clasping her hands.

'Have not you yourself just said "Never"?'

'Well, then, yes! *Never*,' she repeated vehemently.

This final *Never*, spoken in the fear of falling once more under Lousteau's influence, was interpreted by him as the death-warrant of his power, since Dinah remained insensible to his sarcastic scorn.

The journalist could not suppress a tear. He was losing a sincere and unbounded affection. He had found in Dinah the gentlest La Vallière, the most delightful Pompadour that any egoist short of a king could hope for; and, like a boy who has discovered that by dint of tormenting a cockchafer he has killed it, Lousteau shed a tear.

Madame de La Baudraye rushed out of the private room where they had been dining, paid the bill, and fled home to the Rue de l'Arcade, scolding herself and thinking herself a brute.

Dinah, who had made her house a model of comfort, now metamorphosed herself. This double metamorphosis cost thirty thousand francs more than her husband had anticipated.

The fatal accident which in 1842 deprived the House of Orleans of the heir-presumptive having necessitated a meeting of the Chambers in August of that year, little La Baudraye came to present his titles to the Upper House sooner than he had expected, and then saw what his wife had done. He was so much delighted, that he paid the thirty thousand francs without a word, just as he had formerly paid eight thousand for decorating La Baudraye.

On his return from the Luxembourg, where he had been presented according to custom by two of his peers—the Baron de Nucingen and the Marquis de Montriveau—the new Count met the old Duc de Chaulieu, a former creditor, walking along, umbrella in hand, while he himself sat perched in a low chaise on which his coat-of-arms was resplendent, with the motto, *Deo sic patet fides et hominibus.* This contrast filled his heart with a large draught of the balm on which the middle class has been getting drunk ever since 1840.

Madame de La Baudraye was shocked to see her husband improved and looking better than on the day of his marriage. The little dwarf, full of rapturous delight, at sixty-four triumphed in the life which had so long been denied him; in the family, which his handsome cousin Milaud of Nevers had declared he would never have; and in his wife—who had asked Monsieur and Madame de Clagny to dinner to meet the curé of the parish and his two sponsors to the Chamber of Peers. He petted the children with fatuous delight.

The handsome display on the table met with his approval.

'These are the fleeces of the Berry sheep,' said he, showing Monsieur de Nucingen the dish-covers surmounted by his newly-won coronet. 'They are of silver, you see!'

Though consumed by melancholy, which she concealed with the determination of a really superior

woman, Dinah was charming, witty, and, above all, young again in her court mourning.

'You might declare,' cried La Baudraye to Monsieur de Nucingen, with a wave of his hand to his wife, 'that the Countess was not yet thirty.'

'Ah, ha! Matame is a voman of dirty!' replied the Baron, who was prone to time-honoured remarks, which he took to be the small change of conversation.

'In every sense of the words,' replied the Countess. 'I am, in fact, five-and-thirty, and mean to set up a little passion——'

'Oh yes, my wife ruins me in curiosities and china images——'

'She started that mania at an early age,' said the Marquis de Montriveau with a smile.

'Yes,' said La Baudraye, with a cold stare at the Marquis, whom he had known at Bourges, 'you know that in -25, -26, and -27, she picked a million francs' worth of treasures. Anzy is a perfect museum.'

'What a cool hand!' thought Monsieur de Clagny, as he saw this little country miser quite on the level of his new position.

But misers have savings of all kinds ready for use.

On the day after the vote on the Regency had passed the Chambers, the little Count went back to Sancerre for the vintage, and resumed his old habits.

In the course of that winter, the Comtesse de La Baudraye, with the support of the Attorney-General to the Court of Appeals, tried to form a little circle. Of course, she had an 'at home' day, she made a selection among men of mark, receiving none but those of serious purpose and ripe years. She tried to amuse herself by going to the Opera, French and Italian. Twice a week she appeared there with her mother and Madame de Clagny, who was made by her husband to visit Dinah. Still, in spite of her cleverness, her charming manners, her fashionable stylishness, she was never really happy

but with her children, on whom she lavished all her disappointed affection.

Worthy Monsieur de Clagny tried to recruit women for the Countess's circle, and he succeeded; but he was more successful among the advocates of piety than the women of fashion.

'And they bore her!' said he to himself with horror, as he saw his idol matured by grief, pale from remorse, and then, in all the splendour of recovered beauty, restored by a life of luxury and care for her boys. This devoted friend, encouraged in his efforts by her mother and by the curé, was full of expedient. Every Wednesday he introduced some celebrity from Germany, England, Italy, or Prussia to his dear Countess; he spoke of her as a quite exceptional woman to people to whom she hardly addressed two words; but she listened to them with such deep attention that they went away fully convinced of her superiority. In Paris, Dinah conquered by silence, as at Sancerre she had conquered by loquacity. Now and then, some smart saying about affairs, or sarcasm on an absurdity, betrayed a woman accustomed to deal with ideas—the woman who, four years since, had given new life to Lousteau's articles.

This phase was to the poor lawyer's hapless passion like the late season known as the Indian summer after a sunless year. He affected to be older than he was, to have the right to befriend Dinah without doing her an injury, and kept himself at a distance as though he were young, handsome, and compromising, like a man who has happiness to conceal. He tried to keep his little attentions a profound secret, and the trifling gifts which Dinah showed to every one; and he endeavoured to suggest a dangerous meaning for his little services.

'He plays at passion,' said the Countess, laughing. She made fun of Monsieur de Clagny to his face, and the lawyer said, 'She notices me.'

'I impress that poor man so deeply,' said she to her

mother, laughing, 'that if I would say Yes, I believe he would say No.'

One evening Monsieur de Clagny and his wife were taking his dear Countess home from the theatre, and she was deeply pensive. They had been to the first performance of Léon Gozlan's first play, *La Main Droite et la Main Gauche* (The Right Hand and the Left).

'What are you thinking about?' asked the lawyer, alarmed at his idol's dejection.

This deep and persistent melancholy, though disguised by the Countess, was a perilous malady for which Monsieur de Clagny knew no remedy; for true love is often clumsy, especially when it is not reciprocated. True love takes its expression from the character. Now, this good man loved after the fashion of Alceste, when Madame de La Baudraye wanted to be loved after the manner of Philinte. The meaner side of love can never get on with the Misanthrope's loyalty. Thus, Dinah had taken care never to open her heart to this man. How could she confess to him that she sometimes regretted the slough she had left?

She felt a void in this fashionable life; she had no one for whom to dress, or whom to tell of her successes and triumphs. Sometimes the memory of her wretchedness came to her, mingled with memories of consuming joys. She would hate Lousteau for not taking any pains to follow her; she would have liked to get tender or furious letters from him.

Dinah made no reply, so Monsieur de Clagny repeated the question, taking the Countess's hand and pressing it between his own with devout respect.

'Will you have the right hand or the left?' said she, smiling.

'The left,' said he, 'for I suppose you mean the truth or a fib.'

'Well, then, I saw him,' she said, speaking into the lawyer's ear. 'And as I saw him looking so sad, so out

of heart, I said to myself, Has he a cigar? Has he any money?'

'If you wish for the truth, I can tell it you,' said the lawyer. 'He is living as a husband with Fanny Beaupré. You have forced me to tell you this secret; I should never have told you, for you might have suspected me perhaps of an ungenerous motive.'

Madame de la Baudraye grasped his hand.

'Your husband,' said she to her chaperon, 'is one of the rarest souls!—Ah! Why——'

She shrank into her corner, looking out of the window, but she did not finish her sentence, of which the lawyer could guess the end: 'Why had not Lousteau a little of your husband's generosity of heart?'

This information served, however, to cure Dinah of her melancholy; she threw herself into the whirl of fashion. She wished for success, and she achieved it; still, she did not make much way with women, and found it difficult to get introductions.

In the month of March, Madame Piédefer's friends the priests and Monsieur de Clagny made a fine stroke by getting Madame de La Baudraye appointed receiver of subscriptions for the great charitable work founded by Madame de Carcado. Then she was commissioned to collect from the Royal Family their donations for the benefit of the sufferers from the earthquake at Guadeloupe. The Marquise d'Espard, to whom Monsieur de Canalis read the list of ladies thus appointed, one evening at the Opera, said, on hearing that of the Countess—

'I have lived a long time in the world, and I can remember nothing finer than the manœuvres undertaken for the rehabilitation of Madame de La Baudraye.'

In the early spring, which, by some whim of our planets, smiled on Paris in the first week of March in 1843, making the Champs Élysées green and leafy before

Longchamp, Fanny Beaupré's attaché had seen Madame de La Baudraye several times without being seen by her. More than once he was stung to the heart by one of those promptings of jealousy and envy familiar to those who are born and bred provincials, when he beheld his former mistress comfortably ensconced in a handsome carriage, well dressed, with dreamy eyes, and his two little boys, one at each window. He accused himself with all the more virulence because he was waging war with the sharpest poverty of all—poverty unconfessed. Like all essentially light and frivolous natures, he cherished the singular point of honour which consists in never derogating in the eyes of one's own little public, which makes men on the Bourse commit crimes to escape expulsion from the temple of the goddess Per-cent., and has given some criminals courage enough to perform acts of virtue.

Lousteau dined and breakfasted and smoked as if he were a rich man. Not for an inheritance would he have bought any but the dearest cigars, for himself as well as for the playwright or author with whom he went into the shop. The journalist took his walks abroad in patent leather boots; but he was constantly afraid of an execution on goods which, to use the bailiffs' slang, had already received the last sacrament. Fanny Beaupré had nothing left to pawn, and her salary was pledged to pay her debts. After exhausting every possible advance of pay from newspapers, magazines, and publishers, Étienne knew not of what ink he could churn gold. Gambling-houses, so ruthlessly suppressed, could no longer, as of old, cash I O U's drawn over the green table by beggary in despair. In short, the journalist was reduced to such extremity that he had just borrowed a hundred francs of the poorest of his friends, Bixiou, from whom he had never yet asked for a franc. What distressed Lousteau was not the fact of owing five thousand francs, but seeing himself bereft of his elegance,

and of the furniture purchased at the cost of so many privations, and added to by Madame de La Baudraye.

On April the 3rd, a yellow poster, torn down by the porter after being displayed on the wall, announced the sale of a handsome suite of furniture on the following Saturday, the day fixed for sales under legal authority. Lousteau was taking a walk, smoking cigars, and seeking ideas—for, in Paris, ideas are in the air, they smile on you from a street corner, they splash up with a spurt of mud from under the wheels of a cab! Thus loafing, he had been seeking ideas for articles, and subjects for novels for a month past, and had found nothing but friends who carried him off to dinner or to the play, and who intoxicated his woes, telling him that champagne would inspire him.

'Beware,' said the virulent Bixiou one night, the man who would at the same moment give a comrade a hundred francs and stab him to the heart with a sarcasm; 'if you go to sleep drunk every night, one day you will wake up mad.'

On the day before, the Friday, the unhappy wretch, although he was accustomed to poverty, felt like a man condemned to death. Of old he would have said—

'Well, the furniture is very old! I will buy new.'

But he was incapable now of literary legerdemain. Publishers, undermined by piracy, paid badly; the newspapers made close bargains with hard-driven writers, as the Opera managers did with tenors that sang flat.

He walked on, his eye on the crowd, though seeing nothing, a cigar in his mouth, and his hands in his pockets, every feature of his face twitching, and an affected smile on his lips. Then he saw Madame de La Baudraye go by in a carriage; she was going to the Boulevard by the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin to drive in the Bois.

'There is nothing else left!' said he to himself, and he went home to smarten himself up.

That evening, at seven, he arrived in a hackney cab at Madame de La Baudraye's door, and begged the porter to send a note up to the Countess—a few lines, as follows:—

'Would Madame la Comtesse do Monsieur Lousteau the favour of receiving him for a moment, and at once?'

This note was sealed with a seal which as lovers they had both used. Madame de La Baudraye had had the word *Parce que* engraved on a genuine Oriental carnelian—a potent word—a woman's word—the word that accounts for everything, even for the Creation.

The Countess had just finished dressing to go to the Opera; Friday was her night in turn for her box. At the sight of this seal she turned pale.

'I will come,' she said, tucking the note into her dress.

She was firm enough to conceal her agitation, and begged her mother to see the children put to bed. She then sent for Lousteau, and received him in a boudoir, next to the great drawing-room, with open doors. She was going to a ball after the Opera, and was wearing a beautiful dress of brocade in stripes alternately plain and flowered with pale blue. Her gloves, trimmed with tassels, showed off her beautiful white arms. She was shimmering with lace and all the dainty trifles required by fashion. Her hair dressed, *à la Sévigné*, gave her a look of elegance; a necklace of pearls lay on her bosom like bubbles on snow.

'What is the matter, Monsieur?' said the Countess, putting out her foot from below her skirt to rest it on a velvet cushion. 'I thought, I hoped, I was quite forgotten.'

'If I should reply *Never*, you would refuse to believe me,' said Lousteau, who remained standing, or walked about the room, chewing the flowers he plucked from

the flower-stands full of plants that scented the room.

For a moment silence reigned. Madame de La Baudraye, studying Lousteau, saw that he was dressed as the most fastidious dandy might have been.

'You are the only person in the world who can help me, or hold out a plank to me—for I am drowning, and have already swallowed more than one mouthful——' said he, standing still in front of Dinah, and seeming to yield to an overpowering impulse. 'Since you see me here, it is because my affairs are going to the devil.'

'That is enough,' said she; 'I understand.'

There was another pause, during which Lousteau turned away, took out his handkerchief, and seemed to wipe away a tear.

'How much do you want, Étienne?' she went on in motherly tones. 'We are at this moment old comrades; speak to me as you would to—to Bixiou.'

'To save my furniture from vanishing into thin air to-morrow morning at the auction mart, eighteen hundred francs! To repay my friends, as much again! Three quarters' rent to the landlord—whom you know. —My "uncle" wants five hundred francs——'

'And you?—to live on?'

'Oh! I have my pen——'

'It is heavier to lift than any one could believe who reads your articles,' said she, with a subtle smile.—'I have not such a sum as you need, but come to-morrow at eight; the bailiff will surely wait till nine, especially if you bring him away to pay him.'

She must, she felt, dismiss Lousteau, who affected to be unable to look at her; she herself felt such pity as might cut every social Gordian knot.

'Thank you,' she added, rising and offering her hand to Lousteau. 'Your confidence has done me good! It is long indeed since my heart has known such joy——'

Lousteau took her hand and pressed it tenderly to his heart.

'A drop of water in the desert—and sent by the hand of an angel!—God always does things handsomely!'

He spoke half in jest and half pathetically; but, believe me, as a piece of acting it was as fine as Talma's in his famous part of *Leicester*, which was played throughout with touches of this kind. Dinah felt his heart beating through his coat; it was throbbing with satisfaction, for the journalist had had a narrow escape from the hawks of justice; but it also beat with a very natural fire at seeing Dinah rejuvenescent and restored by wealth.

Madame de La Baudraye, stealing an examining glance at Étienne, saw that his expression was in harmony with the flowers of love, which, as she thought, had blossomed again in that throbbing heart; she tried to look once into the eyes of the man she had loved so well, but the seething blood rushed through her veins and mounted to her brain. Their eyes met with the same fiery glow as had encouraged Lousteau on the Quay by the Loire to crumple Dinah's muslin gown. The Bohemian put his arm round her waist, she yielded, and their cheeks were touching.

'Here comes my mother, hide!' cried Dinah in alarm. And she hurried forward to intercept Madame Piédefer.

'Mamma,' said she—this word was to the stern old lady a coaxing expression which never failed of its effect—'will you do me a great favour? Take the carriage and go yourself to my banker, Monsieur Mongenod, with a note I will give you, and bring back six thousand francs. Come, come—it is an act of charity; come into my room.'

And she dragged away her mother, who seemed very anxious to see who it was that her daughter had been talking with in the boudoir.

Two days afterwards, Madame Piédefer held a conference with the curé of the parish. After listening to the lamentations of the old mother, who was in despair, the priest said very gravely—

'Any moral regeneration which is not based on a strong religious sentiment, and carried out in the bosom of the Church, is built on sand.—The many means of grace enjoined by the Catholic religion, small as they are, and not understood, are so many dams necessary to restrain the violence of evil promptings. Persuade your daughter to perform all her religious duties, and we shall save her yet.'

Within ten days of this meeting the Hôtel de La Baudraye was shut up. The Countess, the children, and her mother, in short, the whole household, including a tutor, had gone away to Sancerre, where Dinah intended to spend the summer. She was everything that was nice to the Count, people said.

And so the Muse of Sancerre had simply come back to family and married life; but certain evil tongues declared that she had been compelled to come back, for that the little peer's wishes would no doubt be fulfilled—he hoped for a little girl.

Gatien and Monsieur Gravier lavished every care, every servile attention on the handsome Countess. Gatien, who during Madame de La Baudraye's long absence had been to Paris to learn the arts of *lionnerie* or dandyism, was supposed to have a good chance of finding favour in the eyes of the disenchanted 'Superior Woman.' Others bet on the tutor; Madame Piédefer urged the claims of religion.

In 1844, about the middle of June, as the Comte de La Baudraye was taking a walk on the Mall at Sancerre with the two fine little boys, he met Monsieur Milaud, the Public Prosecutor, who was at Sancerre on business, and said to him—

'These are my children, cousin.'

'Ah, ha! so these are our children!' replied the lawyer, with a mischievous twinkle.

PARIS, *June* 1843—*August* 1844.

THE END

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